TIKA GOBINDACHANDRA

YOGENDRA DAIBAJNA BIPRA

Translated by

BASANT KUMAR TRIPATHY

PRAGATI UTKAL SANGHA
ROURKELA

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To

Gitanjali,

the mother of my three sons.

From the Publisher's Desk

Pragati Utkal Sangha, one of the oldest socio-cultural instituions of Rourkela, has been trying consistently for uplift of Odia language, literature and culture for a long period of 57 years on the strength of the inspiring ideals of Madhusudan Das, the great visionary Odisha has ever produced. In fact, we launched our initial drive selecting 1st April as the day of national celebration amidst fanfare. Such a non-official endeavour had its root way back in the year 1968 and gradually this has been followed in a routine manner in other urban and rural areas of Odisha. Over and above, our publication avowedly carries forward our effort in upholding various aims and objectives fundamental to the instituion.

Apart from bringing Madhu Babu's speeches and writings into limelight, we made sincere attempts to compile ancient Odia literature, including those which have not been published. On this occasion, it would be unfair, may be an act of ingratitude, unless I recount the selfless services of Prof. Debendra Kumar Dash, the life and soul behind all our publications.

To acquaint the reading public across the nations with the gloious aspects of Odia poetry in times past we are bringing out an eighteenth century poetical work in translation, *Tika Gobindachandra,* now considered part of Odisha's collective memory. This text is an example of placing the production of literature within the wider framework of culture and religion; a religion shaped by Buddhist mystical thought and Saivite philosophy. Written in an affable and conversational style, this seminal text is an uncanny combination of the profound and the worldly, expressed through clarity,

passion and a lively wit. It represents a story in song on the exploration of a young man of plenty into the other world, which the poet considers "an extraordinary feat for a man in Kaliyuga."

On the occasion of the publication of *Tika Gobindachandra* I extend my thanks to Basant Kumar Tripathy who chose to translate it into English, thus plucking it from age-old obscurity. I also thank Urmishree Bedamatta for her brilliant introduction.

Nirod Kumar Samantaray

President, Pragati Utkal Sangha

FOREWORD

There is no doubt that oral literature precedes written literature. In Odia, *vratakatha*, *osha*, *chautisha*, *chaupada*, *shodasha*, *webi*. *loli* etc. were different kinds of oral compositions. Besides, there were different kinds of prose which were sung. Several texts came from oral tradition into the textual tradition at later times. This explains variations in texts in different cultural traditions.

Sarala Das wrote *Mahabharata* for the common man. Jagannath Das wrote the Odia *Bhagabata* for his mother. Balaram Das wrote *Dandi Ramayana* in people's language and people's meter. In this process, several ballads were also written. In these ballads, *saralikarana* of Brahmajnana was one of the important features. For this purpose, both elaboration and explanation were resorted to. *Tika Gobindachandra* may be seen from this perspective.

Both the translation and the introduction are of high quality. The introduction takes us into dimensions of research not commonly seen in Odia criticism today. I hope this text will find favour with the reading public.

Debi Prasanna Pattanayak

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Travelling along the shore of Odia literature which is more than one thousand years long, I stumbled upon a tiny pebble among crags. Fancied by it, I carried it home. Later, I realized that it was not a pebble for children to play with, but a pearl of wisdom, long ago formed inside the shell of an oyster that still remains untraceable.

That pearl was *Tika Gobindachandra*.

Deeply fascinated, I made it into a necklace and wore it; it hung round my neck like that scriptural serpent with its tail in its mouth. Soon I felt a sensation, the like of which I had never experienced in my life. I could see a sorrowing mother sending her son on a journey – from a life of royal luxury to that of renouncement, a sage demonstrating his pedagogic prowess to defeat mortality, hundreds of young women beating their heads at the loss of their marital prosperity, a young prince displaying his indomitable will to achieve immortality, the pictures of the whole of India, the seven seas and the seven islands and the abodes of the gods in Heaven. I, too, heard the story of the ten incarnations of Vishnu from none other than the great Gorekh. It made me cry, laugh, re-gather my courage and confidence and finally relieved me of the stress, the only thing this modern world has to offer us.

I would like to extend my thanks to Paul St-Pierre for his 'holy' instructions, Urmishree for being the 'kindly light' and Dr Debi Prasanna Pattanayak for his blessings.

My thanks are due to Pragati Utkal Sangha and Sri Debendra Kumar Dash without whose sincere efforts the book would not have seen the light of the day. I also thank Dr. Sricharan Mohanty and Sri Manmath Pattanayak for coordinating the production work.

Dear Silu, my sweet little daughter-in-law! Won't you take your share of thanks for preparing the manuscript with avidity and pleasure?

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INTRODUCTION

Urmishree Bedamatta

Lord of headlines,
help us read
the small print.

Lord of the sixth sense,
give us back
our five senses.

('Prayers to Lord Murugan', A.K. Ramanujan)

Jagila re mata! (Wake up O mother!)–In time long past, in lazy afternoons on the holy days of *sankranti* and *purnima*, rural Odisha would wake up to this call of ash-smeared yogis dressed in ochre robes. Immediately after, the yogis' *kendera*[1] would tremble to their song, the story of Raja Gobindachandra. The women at home would hurriedly come out with offerings of coarse rice or stale watered rice and drive away the yogis as if listening to them would be 'a sin'. The yogis would accept only as much as they could carry in their bowl, which they called the *shiva thala* (Lord Shiva's bowl), and leave. These singers of tales, who were Nath yogis, and their subject, the legend of Raja Gobindachandra, are now part of Odisha's collective memory.

In India, the story of the prince who became a yogi shares the fate of the story of Rama. Just as A.K. Ramanujan asks in his "Three Hundred *Ramayanas*" 'How many *Ramayanas*? Three hundred? Three thousand?' one may ask: How many Gobindachandras? Three hundred? Three thousand? Truly, as Ramanujan says, "nothing in India occurs uniquely" (143). But unlike Rama of the several Ramayanas, the yogi prince goes by at least three different names–Gopichand, Gopichandra, and Gobindachandra–and shares different lineages in

tales told about him in different regions of India and even in Nepal and Tibet.

The legend of the yogi prince is hosted by mostly three kinds of compositions: bardic, poetic and *sangits* (musical drama). The accounts in Grierson, Temple and Gold (to be discussed later) are bardic performances[2]. The poetic composition of the legend retrieved so far is that of Yasobanta Das's *Gobindachandra* in Odia. The third kind (*sangit*) existed mostly in North India, where the story of Gopichand was highly popular[3]. Hansen (65, 67) reports two kinds of compositions of the legend in late nineteenth century North India – the *Gopichand* plays written by Lakshman Singh (also known as Lachhman Das), and the Gopichand text in R. C. Temple's, *The Legends*, Vol. II, composed by a poet Bansi Lal (see note 2). The Odia *Tika*, which is being introduced here, was written by Yogendra Daibajna Bipra and was popular among the Nath singers in Odisha.

The earliest printed collection of one of the accounts[4] of the story of the yogi prince seems to be that of Sir George A. Grierson whose text is titled *The Song of Mánik Chandra* retrieved from the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (he discovered the epic during his investigation of what he calls the Rangpur dialect of Kamarupa; Rangpur is now a district in northern Bangladesh). In his introduction to the text *Mánik Chandra* he tries to clarify the historicity of the legend: I do not doubt but that king Mánik Chandra, and his terrible wife did once exist; but the traditions current concerning him run so counter to ascertained history, that I have been able to discover very few grains of truth amongst the legendary chaff that has accumulated about his name (1). The 'legendary chaff' so disturbed Grierson that he took great pains to establish the actual place and time of Mánik Chandra who he finally called the 'putative father' of Gopichandra (9), who is the hero of the story. Grierson's construction of Gopichandra's lineage runs thus:

Dharma Pála (flourished about the year 1350 A. D.)

Mánik Chandra (Dharma Pála's brother who died early)

Gopi Chandra

All through his lengthy exploration Grierson could not but let traditions seep in. The Westerner, who could, by no means, ascertain the historicity of the story, says in his concluding remarks: "Such is the epic of Rangpur, containing here and there a tiny pearl of interest, hidden amidst the rubbish, which is mainly presented to our view" (12).

We have another telling of the story of the yogi prince in Rajasthani, and this time it is a performance by a member of the Nath sect, recorded by Ann Grodzins Gold in her book *A Carnival of Parting*[5]. Gold chanced upon the story of Gopichand during her field research on life cycle rituals in rural Rajasthan. As she recorded while Madhu Nath performed Gopichand's *janmpatri* (birth story), she was reminded of the character in the Punjabi telling recorded by Temple in *The Legends*, Vol. II. Temple calls it "The Legend of Raja Gopichand, as played at Jagadhri in the Ambala District" (1). Says Gold, 'I was immediately intrigued and delighted: here was a living bard singing a story that was obviously about the same character as Temple's Punjabi version, yet evidently startlingly different in certain prominent details. I recalled from Temple nothing about Gopichand's being won as a boon by his mother's ascetic prowess or borrowed from the yogi Jalindar. Yet these were the dominant elements that framed the plot of Madhu's "Birth Story"' (4). What Gold's title of her book and Temple's title of Gopichand's story acknowledge is the existence of multiple accounts of the story, otherwise they would not have delimited their accounts by naming the performer (as Gold does) or the place where it was performed (as Temple does). And these stories are not eruptions; they 'are there, "always already"' (Ramanujan 158; see note 4).

All these collectors differ from each other in some respects. Unlike Gold, who remembers Temple, neither Grierson nor Temple makes any reference to forms of the story outside their province of involvement. But Temple, unlike Grierson, makes no personal attempt to trace Gopichand's lineage. Rather, he explains how bards could have possibly invented mythical genealogies to rouse interest. He calls such inventions the bards' 'pious frauds' (x; see note 2). For Temple, the 'colonizer-folklorist,' the legend in itself was not important: 'It is valuable in so far as it belongs to the cycle of legends that has collected round the memory of the great Sanskrit author, Bhartrihari' (Temple 1 in Naithani 6; see note 2). Clearly, the voice of an outsider who had just stumbled upon a story, which in modern terms, was part of the Little Traditions. Mark the non-committal tone:

Gopichand is always described as being his nephew (bhanja, sister's son), and usually goes by the name of Gopichand Bhartari or Bhartali.

[The Legend of Gopichand closely follows that of Bhartrihari himself, in that he gave up his kingdom and became a religious mendicant, it being remembered that popularly Bhartrihari was the elder brother of Vikramaditya,in whose favour he abdicated.]

[In the Legend Gopichand's capital is called Dharanagar, which I take to be Dhara, the seat of Vikramaditya. The hero's country is, however, said to be Gaur Bangala or Bengal, while the bards always understand Panipat by Dharanagar.]

The Rajasthani performance of the epic (by Madhu Nath) in Gold (18) also stands by this genealogical history.

(Image courtesy: Ann Grodzins Gold (1992). *A Carnival of Parting* (see note 5))

The Odia tradition calls the yogi prince Gobindachandra. The legend of Raja Gobindachandra, which circulated in various forms in pre-medieval, medieval and post-medieval Odisha, is widely known as the composition of Yasobanta Das, one of the *Pancha Sakha* (Five Friends), who translated Vedic philosophies in the language of the common people. Yasobanta's delineation of Gobindachandra's lineage stands thus:

Shurachandra (of *Bangadesh*)

Tarachandra

Brahmachandra

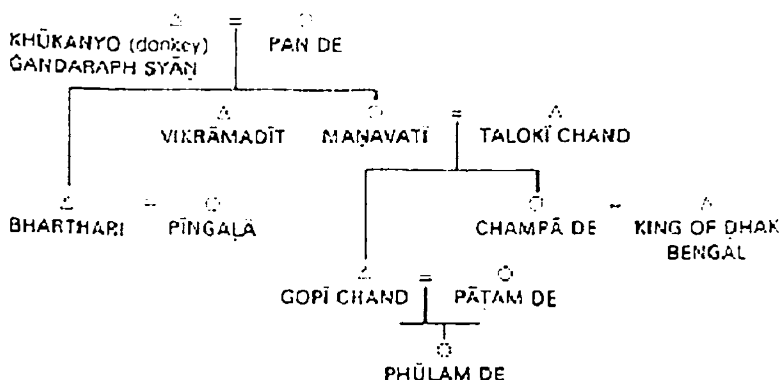
Gobindachandra

Meruchandra

Bishnuchandra

Ripuchandra

Yasobanta and his friends Balaram Das, Jagannath Das, Achyutananda Das and Shishu Ananta are believed to have lived in 15th-16th century Odisha[6]. However, unlike Jagannath Das's *Bhagavatha* which is read or recited in many Odia homes today, *Gobindachandra* is a forbidden text for it is believed that its recital would bring sorrow to the household. Yasobanta's composition has been titled differently in several books. Sahoo[7] and Mohanty[8] entitle it *Gobindachandra*[9] whereas Mukherjee (55; see note 26) makes note of the text as '*Govinda Chandra Tika* ascribed to Yasovanta Mallika of the 16th century'. Rath[10] (in B. Mohanty 522) calls Yasobanta's work *Gita Gobindachandra*. But the text which was sung by the yogis and



which now exists in popular memory is *Tika Gobindachandra*. The author of *Tika* names himself at the end as Yogendra Daibagyan Bipra [Brahmin pandit?], and could have lived and wrote in the pre-Panchasakha period. Why he may have come before the *Pancha Sakha* or at least before Yasobanta Das will be discussed later. According to Mukherjee, *Tika Govinda Chandra* was composed by Uddhava Das[11] (pp. 55-56), whereas Mohanty makes no reference to the *Tika*. Today, one finds *Tika* in a non-expensive printed form, similar to a chapbook, with no colophon and with no information from the author about his floruit. One would treat *Tika* as a contemporary version but for a particular scribal pratice in pre-modern India of identifying oneself at the end of the text.

In each of the accounts of the legend of the yogi king available in Bengali, Rajasthani, Punjabi and Odia, there are features which get 'translated, transplanted, transposed' (Ramanujan 134). The story is the same; a prince renounces his kingdom and all the pleasures of a worldly life to become a yogi. The difference is in the details. To begin with, the following is a quick view of the similarities and differences in family relationships of the yogi prince in the afore-mentioned accounts:

In the Odia telling Maunavati is Mukuta Dei's mother and Gobindachandra's grandmother.

* Odia commentators (Sahoo 52) believe Godama is a misspelling of Podama (an apabhramsa of Padmavati, who was the queen of Gajapati Purushottam Dev, who ruled Kalinga (present day Odisha) from 1600-1621 A. D.). Rodama, according to Gouranga Charan Ray (ibid.), is the apabhramsa of Rodrama, who was also a queen of Purushottam Dev.

The above matrix shows the points of intersection in the various accounts as well as how the yogi prince's life has been 'replicated in many lands by many people' (Campbell 136)[12]. All these accounts, however, flourished in a commonly shared Nath religious backdrop in medieval India[13]. About the actual time and place of the birth and life of the famous Nath *Siddha* Gorakhnath (and his disciples-the various other *siddha*s of the Nath cult, including Gobindachandra / Gopichand / Gopichandra), Hazariprasad Dwivedi[14] takes various accounts into consideration, at the end of which he has this to say: According to the time-span of the so-called disciples, he [Gorakhnath] is sometimes believed to have lived in the eighth century, sometimes tenth, eleventh, and sometimes even in the first and second centuries (13; tr.).

* * *

So, whether it was or it was not, in a certain kingdom there once lived a prince who became a yogi.[15] At this point, the need to examine how the story 'already made' has been received and recreated in the Odia tradition is urgent. For now, we have two Odia accounts, by Yasobanta Das and *Tika Gobindachandra* by Yogendra Daibajna Bipra[16]. Both Yasobanta and Yogendra make it clear that they are re-presenting a story:

Listen, Oh Noble Ones! The story of Kaliyuga,

How the king of Bangadesha quit his throne

And became a yogi. (Yasobanta; verse stanza 1044)

I could not have completed

Gobinda's story without God's help. (Tika, I. 1724-25)

It would be befitting at this point to raise questions about the title of the text *Tika Gobindachandra*. The *tika* belongs to the commentarial genre in Hindu, Jain and Buddhist exegetical literature[17]. Most commentaries would come into being along with the source texts while many would follow several years later offering explanations in different new interpretive frames. The *tika*s are explanations of the religious thoughts and philosophies embedded in the source texts. While the source texts carry the 'meaning' in the form of stories, legends, or historical anecdotes, the *tika*s explain the meaning. Besides this, the commentaries provide valuable glimpses of social life. The practice of 'tika' writing was prompted by a social need to unfold the layers of meaning in a poetic composition[18].

Characters	Bengali telling (in Grierson)	Punjabi telling (in Temple)	Rajasthani telling (in Gold)	Odia telling (in Yasobanta Das and in the *Tika*)
Hero	Gopichandra	Gopichand	Gopichand	Gobindachandra
Hero's mother	Mayana Mati	Mainawanti	Manawati	Mukuta Dei#
Hero's father	Manik Chandra	X	Taloki Chand	Ripuchandra
Hero's wife/wives	Aduna & Paduna (chief wives)	Patam Dai (chief wife)	Patam De (chief wife)	Rodama & Kodama /Godama* (chief wives)
Hero's daughter	X	Raj Kanwari	Phulam De	X
Hero's sister	Champa De	Champa De	Champa De Rani	Sister present but unnamed (in *Tika*);
Hero's foster brother	Lankeswar (a foundling reared by Mayana Mati)	X	X	X
Hero's maternal uncles	X	Bhartrihari & Vikramaditya	Bharthari & Vikramaditya	X
Hero's father-in-law and father of his chief wives	Haríœ Chandra	X	X	X

Why is *Tika Gobindachandra* so named? The general format of the *tika* is a detailed explanation after every two or four lines of verse. *Tika Gobindachandra*, however, has no such format. The text is closer to the prose style written in verse form as would lend the text to singing– in the form of a ballad. The elaborations and repetitions in the text are allowed by its ballad style. While Yasobanta's *Gobindachandra*, written in an elevated *kavya* style strictly focuses on the journey of the prince, Yogendra's *Tika* celebrates the acuity and spiritual prowess of the prince's mother. Was there a popular story cycle on the prince's mother? Are Yasobanta's and Yogendra's compositions only part of some kind of Eastern recensions of the popular legend of the prince-turned yogi? This seems likely, if one considers the multiple story cycles on the various characters of the Ramayana.[19]

If Yogendra indeed came after Yasobanta (see Sahoo 1981)[20], he had a master text–the latter's *Gobindachandra* to deal with. But nowhere in *Tika* does Yasobanta or his text or any other author for that matter find mention. This gives us no reason to believe that Yogendra's *Tika* was a commentary or an explanation of a master text. The nature of *Tika*'s composition, the tonal shift brought about by the change from the terse pithy statements of Mukuta Dei in Yasobanta to the *karuna rasa* evoked in the mother's entreaties to her son in Yogendra, tells us that it was not a product of mere scribal transmission. It looks more like the result of a more complex translational practice, to include reworking or a free adaptation. Such a practice was more common than rare, in Medieval French literature for example, as investigated by Douglas Kelly. Kelly uses a concept called *translatio* to explain such a practice

"There are three prominent modes of *translatio* in medieval French: translation as such, including scribal transmission; adaptation; and allegorical or extended metaphorical discourse. In each case, a source, an extant *materia* surviving from the past, is re-done by a new writer who is, in effect, the translator.... *Translatio* is in fact rarely only close translation. The translator has a specific intention in making the translation. And that intention may differ from the original author's." (291-92)[21]

Not only that; *Tika* marks a departure from the rhetorical style in Yasobanta, the emendations result in a generic transformation and thus *Tika* needs to be seen as a text in its own right. Further investigation of such instances in our own regional literatures may lead us to an elaborate picture of flourishing oral and scribal cultures

and show us how and in what circumstances specific genres of literature were pushed to the margins.

Coming to the text itself, the *Tika* cannot but be studied without the reader constantly and simultaneously operating with faith and suspicion. There seem to be too many signals waiting to be read making it a highly entropic text. The author plays on the entire gamut of familial and social relations of the times while showing how an individual gradually and tortuously steps out of all the trappings of a worldly life–name, fame, wealth, status, comforts, love, honour and pride–to achieve self-realisation. Curiously, the hero is nowhere shown to have achieved that. At the end, he is shown moving freely across space and time at his own free will. The quest of self-realization seems to have achieved no closure. Was it a deliberate design? Was it only thus far the author could go? The story of the yogi prince has been 'quilted' using myth components from various religious traditions which give us multiple perspectives but they have been strained, as it were, through the Nath mythical structures. There can be no monolithic truthful interpretation, there is a world of meanings.

Gobindachandra is forced by his mother Mukuta Dei to renounce his kingdom and become a yogi in return for immortality. There are, however, predominantly two points of difference in the discourse features in the two accounts: The length and intensity of focus on and the characterization of Mukuta Dei, and the tone and texture of the dialogue between Mukuta Dei and Gobindachandra. Yasobanta begins by giving a lengthy introduction of Gobindachandra and his thriving kingdom and the comforts and pleasures of life inside the palace. His mother Mukuta Dei is introduced as *maha punyavati* (pious) and a direct disciple of Gorekhnath. His chief wives Rodama and Godama are beautiful and chaste. The first scene of action is Gobindachandra's court where the prince is surrounded by flatterers praising his looks. At such a time, he is seen preening before the mirror when Mukuta Dei arrives in the assembly. She sits beside her son, overcome with rage and horror. Firmly, she directs her son to give up admiring himself and go the way of the *siddhapurushas*. Mukuta Dei here is a spiritual preceptor who is also a mother and the seriousness and immediacy of her appeal is striking. She is strict and righteous and not the magician she is in the Bengali account, *The Song of Manik Chandra*.

In Yogendra's *Tika*, the first scene of action is the courtyard of the queen mother Mukuta Dei who is seen making an appeal to her

son to renounce the world. Using her power of eloquence, she tries to impress on her son that she wants nothing but his well-being which lies in his renunciation of his worldly life. Her narrative is filled with pathos and emotions as she narrates before her son her travails after she was cast away in the forests by her husband Ripuchandra for failing to bear a child. She sends a messenger to inform her parents about her condition. Her father Lauchandra who is a king, sends her a piece of gold. She sells the gold and builds for herself a palace and keeps a whole retinue of servants. She also keeps a pair of parrot and mynah like that of her husband and teaches them to chant *Rama nama*. One day, the mynah's cries sail off to reach her husband's ears. The king then sends his soldiers to trace the bird. On receiving news of a palace in the forests, the king arrives and meets Mukuta Dei. He suspects her of having fallen on ill ways to gather wealth for a life of affluence. To prove her purity, Mukuta Dei immerses herself in fire and emerges unscathed with her body 'cooler than the water in the month of *Magha*' (*Tika*, I. 215-16). Ripuchandra now takes her back after which Mukuta Dei performs a host of *vrata* and *tapa* to bear a child after which is born Gobindachandra. On the twenty-first day of Gobindachandra's birth, the astrologers predict death for the boy in the twenty-first year of his life. The desperate mother silently makes her son undergo all the *samskar*, including marriage, and decides to send him off as a yogi in his twenty-first year to ward off the danger of death. The day finally arrives and Mukuta Dei explains to her son the futility of worldly life and relations and the promise of eternal happiness through *brahmanjnana*. Gobindachandra feels helpless to ignore his mother's wishes and suggests an alternative. He asks his mother to get him a yogi's paraphernalia to which Mukuta Dei replies that hehas to leave the palace and put himself under the tutelage of Hadipa, the scavenger, who was a fallen sage in his past life. Gobindachandra's journey of realisation thus begins in his mother's courtyard, where he undergoes an initiation as his mother leads him lovingly and firmly through an ontological maze.

The importance of Mukuta Dei's arguments as espousing the superiority of the path of asceticism for a spiritually awakened life is obvious but *Tika* problematises renunciation in more ways than one. In Yasobanta the son comes across as a powerless pleasure-loving householder caught in the act of admiring himself in the mirror, which provokes his mother's anger, whereas in the *Tika*, Mukuta Dei is never angry but is always firm. The prince in Yasobanta never speaks against

his mother's wish but he does so in *Tika*. He rebukes his mother for goading him to the path of renunciation after marrying him off to ninety-nine women. 'Why did you not make me a yogi when I was young and innocent?' (*Tika* I. 282-3) he asks. He even calls her a *chandaluni* (lowly woman) and mocks her saying:

What Brahmajnana are you talking about

While living in Banga Bazaar?

You couldn't even prevent Yama

From taking away my father (*Tika* I. 320-23)

He then expresses worry about his kingdom and his subjects, mentions the name of his eleven wives and says he cannot leave them and earn the world's ridicule. Mukuta Dei, however, pleads with him to step out of his current mode of living. Such an exchange which goes on for around 275 lines in the *Tika*, motivates one to look at renunciation as a trope.

Given the central motif of Indian spiritual thought which is that immersion in worldly life is a condition of sleep in which the individual wades in a dream world losing all sense of the Self, Mukuta Dei's persuasion for renunciation is a call for the young Gobindachandra to wake up from this 'sleep'. To renounce the world is to 'wake up' and start a journey towards realization of the Self. In fact, the entire course of Mukuta Dei's actions when she discovers Yama's plans for her son and her painstaking arguments to persuade her son to renounce the world (*Tika* I. 261-354) can be traced to the Nath folklore about the two *Siddhacharyas* Matsyendranath and Gorakhnath. In the poem *Gorakshavijaya*,[22] Matsyendranath's spirit enters the corpse of a king, who has just died, in order to make love to the widowed queen. On receiving this news, his disciple Gorakhnath visits Yama's world and finds that his guru is destined to die. He then erases his name from the list of the dead in Yama's Book of Fates and embarks on a mission to bring Matsyendranath back to consciousness. He takes 'the form of a dancing girl and begins dancing, accompanying himself by mysterious songs' (Eliade 330) and successfully makes Matsyendranath remember his true identity. A slightly different version is found in Krushnacharan Sahoo (28-29) who presents it as a tale of the *Nath* sect as found in *Jogisampradaya Bishkruti*: The queen of Singhala kingdom was unhappy with her diseased husband and prayed to Hanuman seeking him as her husband. But Hanuman presented

Matsyendranath to the queen. Since that day the queen barred yogis from entering her kingdom. Seeing this, Gorakhnath wanted to rescue his guru Matsyendranath from the place. He was stopped by Hanuman but Gorakhnath in order to evade a fight took the disguise of a young boy and presented himself as a *tabla* player. During a dance performance by the famous Kalinga in the queen's court, Gorakhnath managed to play the tabla to the tune of '*Jago Gorekhnath aagaya*'[23] [Awake, here comes Gorekhnath] reminding Matsyendranath of his life's calling and thus rescues his guru from the clutches of sensual pleasure. It is this motif which is played out in the yogi's call at the doorstep '*jagila jagila mata*' [wake up mother].[24] Mukuta Dei and Gobindachandra may, thus, safely be said to be Matsyendranath and Gorakhnath respectively.

In *Tika* the formulation on renunciation has been beautifully translated through the relations that Gobindachandra shares between the women – his mother Mukuta Dei, his wives Rodama andKodama and radhiani, a householder.

Mukuta Dei is presented as a disciple of Gorakhnath. Through the mythic tale in *Gorakshavijaya*, I have shown how Mukuta Dei plays the role of the enlightened Gorakhnath who persuades his guru Matsyendranath (Gobindachandra) to withdraw from the life of worldly pleasure. In Yasobanta, the character of Mukuta Dei is carefully built; as a female Siddha she is more hidden than revealed, unlike in *Manik Chandra* where the prince's mother is shown performing several tricks of a surreal nature, which probably led Grierson to classify her as a "terrible" being. Understanding the conception and nature of the character Mukuta Dei in the Odia accounts is like taking a cloze test. Let's take the test here. The story of female Siddhas circulates as part of the folklore of Vajrayana Buddhism, which held sway in Odisha in 9th-11th centuries. Documented history traces the origins of Vajrayana Buddhism differently to Odisha, Bengal and even the modern day Swat Valley in Pakistan. It is outside the scope of this introduction to go into the details of the origins and spread of Vajrayana Buddism. But a few historical and folkloric accounts, though in a curious intermesh, are difficult to ignore for the promise of links to the character of Mukuta Dei as also to the distinctive Odia origin of the legend hosted thereby. Of the *chaurashi mahasiddhas*[25] said to be the founders of the Vajrayana strand, four – Laksminkara (Laksmikara), Manibhadra, Mekhala and Kanakhala – were female. Laksminkara lived in the eighth century and was the sister of King Indrabhuti of Uddiyana (erstwhile

Odisha). She was married to Jalandhar a Bhauma Kara[26] king and was a famous Tantric Buddhist teacher. A Tibetan folkloric account of the queen instates her as a yogini who during her *sadhana* on a cremation ground initiated a sweeper into Buddhahood. When her husband learns of her powers, he desires to be her disciple. She then tells the king, her husband, to accept the sweeper as his guru. It is not difficult to see the extent and nature of transposition of history and folkore in the conceptualization of Mukuta Dei, who insists that her son take Hadipa the scavenger as his guru. For a fuller appreciation, consider the lore about Manibhadra. Unlike Laksminkara, who was also called "The Mad Princess" in the Tibetan account, Manibhadra finds no place in historical accounts. The same Tibetan account calls her "She of the Broken Pot" and "The Model Wife". Like Laksminkara, she too spends a few days on a cremation ground, doing *sadhana* under the tutelage of a guru. Later she returns to her home and family. She becomes a model wife and gives birth to a son and a daughter. On the 13th year of meeting with her guru, she trips on the root of a tree and breaks the water pot she was carrying. She is found lying in a semi-conscious state staring at the broken pieces of the pot. After regaining consciousness, she sings a "song of realization":

From the beginning of time, sentient beings
Have broken their vessels, and their lives end.
But why do they then return home?
Today, I have broken my vessel.
But I am abandoning my samsara home [sic]
For the realms of pure pleasure.[27]

Compare this with the train of incidents in *Manik Chandra*:

Manik Chandra, Mayana Mati's husband is lying on his death bed. He asks Mayanamati to fetch a pitcher of water for him to quench his thirst. Mayana Mati declines saying Yama would carry him away in her absence. But the dying king persists and Mayana Mati goes to fetch water from the Ganga.

"But Mayaná went to the banks of the Gangá and spake "Hear, O Gangá, I make known unto thee my petition. 77. There is a king whose worship thou hast enjoyed for these twelve years; give one vessel of water and save his life. 78. For one vessel of water thou shalt have forty-two vessels; therefore do thou restore to life a pious king."

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79." For whom thou art taking thy vessel full of water; that pious king hath himself been taken away." 80. On hearing this Mayaná began to weep, and hurled away her vessel worth a lakh of rupees. 81. Mayaná dived fourteen fathoms beneath the water, and sat in contemplation, and saw that the vermilion on her forehead had become discoloured. 82. She saw that her shell bracelets had turned black, and she broke on her head the two bracelets worth a lakh of rupees. (Grierson 71; translated by Grierson from Rangpuri)

In both the accounts, the breaking of the water vessel portends death. The purpose of these accounts is to make clear the folkloric substrata of the characterizations of the queen mother.

The Varkari Bhakti tradition of Maharashtra gives us yet another pointer to Mukuta Dei's characterisation. There was a saint poet called Muktabai (also Muktai) who lived in the thirteenth century and whose small but significant poetic output has enriched Marathi literature. It is her brith details which occupies our attention here. She was the youngest of the four siblings born to Vitthalpant and Rukminibai Kulkarni who were outcast Brahmans[28]. Her brothers were Nivrutti, Jnandev and Sopan. She was initiated into ascetic life by her elder brother Nivrutti who was a Nath ascetic. Muktabai was best known as an enlightened ascetic whose mission was to initiate people into the direct experience of God without the intervention of priests and rituals. In the context of all these, Mukuta Dei turns out to be the product of a refractive imagination of a poet creating in a composite cultural space.

The narrative in *Tika* begins with and is essentially given shape by Mukuta Dei's experiences in the social world and it is the particularity of her experience which imparts a specific tone and tenor to the language in *Tika*. The *Tika*'s mass appeal lies in the fact that the prince renounced the world like the Buddha after he was persuaded by his mother who had pledged immortality for her son after she came to know from Yama that his days in this world were numbered. Womenfolk adore this because of the *karuna rasa* which is evoked in the play on the mother-son relationship and abhor this because of the seeming ruthlessness of the mother (Mukuta Dei's daughters-in-law accuse her of cruelty in hushed voices, *Tika* I. 650-662). Moreover, it is the special nature of Mukuta Dei's experiences as a childless woman and a castaway wife and later as a woman who witnessed the death of her king-husband who was carried to the burial ground on a torn cot

which lends force to her arguments. For this, one has to willingly suspend a reading of the Nath religious tradition[29] which sees Mukuta Dei as a disciple of Gorakhnath and hence capable of such knowledge. One ought not to discredit the mother's capacity for *brahmajnana* through her own experiences. Mythical and historical accounts abound of such cause and effect relationship between suffering and enlightenment. Where else would all that pathos and heart-rending persuasive language come from? The son has to be sent off not because the guru in the mother wants it to happen but because her own experiences as a woman have made her realise that the best way to experience true happiness is to renounce. Her circumstances proved to be her guru just as certain worldly scenes led the Buddha to look inwards. Her son, living as he was, a life of luxury, would have no chance of *nirvana* if he did not take the help of a guru. This guru in turn would make him suffer to 'attain enlightenment'. Mukuta Dei thus embodies the Buddha experience – that of an individual's potential for achieving *nirvana*. The powerful Nath tradition may not allow an unequivocal interpretation of Mukuta Dei's extraordinary power of persuasion as a common human being. Even then, the contribution of Mukuta Dei's social experiences as a woman towards her growth as an enlightened soul, are too powerful to be ignored. The long-drawn character of her argument replete with emotional references to her own travails is a clear representation of a mother trying hard to win the son over to her side. She is a mother like any other (Why did I lead my son thus / My only son now has become a yogi. / After holding him in me for ten months I am now childless / My clan destroyed, I have no one to save me now (Yasobanta's *Gobindachandra* verse stanza 227-8 in Krushnacharan Sahoo 21)), but an enlightened one. She not only forces her son to renounce the world, but also forces herself to renounce the pleasure of playing mother to the son who is her world. In so doing, the mother oscillates between firmness and grief. While Yasobanta's *Gobindachandra* emphasises the son's act of renunciation, *Tika* embodies the sacralisation of a woman's social experiences and the idea of renunciation as espoused in a mother's courtyard.

Gobindachandra has ninety-nine wives, of which Rodama and Kodama are his chief wives. They begin to wail on learning about their husband's plans for renunciation and try to prevent him from leaving. They accuse their mother-in-law of trying to rob them of the pleasures of a married life and abuse Hadipa, their husband's guru, for leading

the prince away from his duties as a husband. They then invoke the example of 'jogibara Trilochan' (Lord Shiva) and beseech the prince to allow them to serve him as Parvati serves Shiva:

Is it not true Trilochan, the yogi of yogis

Has Parvati always by his side,

One eye fixed on meditation,

The other on His wife? (*Tika*, l. 602-5)

In agony because of their unnatural widowhood, they are more than eager to accept a *yati-pati* (yogi-husband) promising not to interrupt his *tapa*. However, Gobindachandra changes the terms of the debate:

He says: Until now you were my wives, now mothers (*Tika* l. 664).

The prince speaks much like Shiva does: Any yogi ought to regard every woman as if she were his mother.[30] He refuses to be moved and is steadfast in his resolve. Gobindachandra's actions may have been guided by the Nath sectal tradition of intolerance towards women. A woman stands for all things negative in the Nath ideological framework. But the prince's steeliness may also have been a response to the discourse on the hypocritical lusting ascetic, a discourse circulating here, there, everywhere, in earth and in heaven and at all times: Parvati is seen accusing Shiva of "ascetic hypocrisy" because of the latter's shameless attempt of seducing the wives of the sages in the Pine Forest[31] while saint Chaitanya refuses to "look upon the face of an ascetic who has had anything to do with a woman."[32] The dialogue between Gobindachandra and his wives thus brings a different analytic on renunciation into perspective, circumscribed by the classic debate on asceticism and sexuality.

Hodama and Kodama are modest in comparison to Aduna and Paduna of *Manik Chandra*. In *Manik Chandra*, it is the wives who demand sons from their husband. But in *Tika* (as well as in Yasobanta's *Gobindachandra*), such a demand comes from the prince's ministers, who advise him to beget sons before becoming a yogi. In a clear transposition of the Shaivite discourse[33] which greatly influenced the Nath yogis, Gobindachandra explains why he has no need of a son:

I need no son, nor do I fear

The sin of not having one.

The root is more important than the branches, (*Tika* l. 701 -3)

Worldly life is disease, so Gobindachandra renounces the world and his mother and his wives are left behind, perhaps to live forever with irreconcilable differences. Do the wives reconcile with their mother-in-law? After receiving yogic knowledge, Gobindachandra is seen secretly visiting his mother twice in twenty four years to keep her abreast of his spiritual journey but he never visits his wives. During his first visit in twelve years after he left his kingdom, he demands a little salt to have with the food served by his mother. An irate Mukuta Dei at once takes him to task and chastises Hadipa for not doing enough:

What have you been teaching him all these years?
I am sorry to see he still takes salt
Which eats away human flesh,
As said by scriptures.
The sense of taste he must give up
In order to be immortal. (*Tika* I. 1161-66)

Gobindachandra leaves to return again at the end of twenty four years and this time he has no craving for food. Mukuta Dei is happy that her son has finally become a Siddha. At this point, a peek into Malik Mohammad Jayasi's *Padmavat* may not be too much of a digression. The main characters in this story are Ratnasen, the king of Chittor, his mother Surasati (Saraswati?) and his main wives Nagmati and Padmavati. Ratnasen, like Gobindachandra, sets out on an epic journey, but with the circumstances inverted. While Mukuta Dei forces her son to renounce the world, Surasati and Nagmati (his main wife) tries to prevent Ratnasen from leaving the world[34]. While Gobindachandra's journey is from *bhoga* to *yoga*, Ratnasen's quest is inspired by the beauty of Padmavati who he desires to have as his wife. The king of Chittor leaves his wife, Nagmati, and his duties as a husband to unite with Padmavati. But he still feels a sense of separation and returns to his bereaving wife Nagmati, with Padmavati by his side. All of them reconcile and live together. Soon after, in a war with the neighbouring kingdom, Ratnasen loses his life and Nagmati and Padmavati perform sati on his funeral pyre. The two queens together have been read as "symbols of the integration of bhoga and yoga" [35]. Artistic legerdemain apart, Yasobanta's *Gobindachandra* and Jayasi's *Padmavat* are important contributions towards formulating the aesthetics of renunciation. More than anything, these poetic compositions are a reflection of the preoccupation of the society in pre-modern India with the problematic of renunciation.

What does Gobindachandra actually renounce? The prince does not renounce society as he lives on alms, he keeps returning to his mother and he stays at various people's houses. Does he renounce the social order? The Kshatriya prince merges his ambition with that of his guru Hadipa who is a scavenger by caste. But he does not follow Hadipa to overturn social hierarchies. He follows him only after he is convinced that he is a Siddha. Hadipa makes his disciple stay at the houses of Rambha the harlot and the liquor distiller. The harlot and the distiller's wife try hard to seduce him but fail, which convinces Hadipa about the death of desire in his pupil. A new perspective on the renunciatory ideal emerges when Gobindachandra stays at the *radhiani*'s house. The *radhiani* remains busy in her work day and night and finds no time to eat or sleep. She sells her produce in the market and gathers wealth which puzzles Gobindachandra who asks her why she is doing this. To this the *radhiani* replies that she saves her wealth for the poor and needy and calls her *tapa* superior than that of Gobindachandra. The prince is tongue-tied in the face of the renunciatory ideals as espoused by the sweeper woman. From the perspectival point of the hardcore householder which the *radhiani* stands for, Gobindachandra is not a renouncer but an escaper who has abandoned his *karma* (duties) as a king and as a husband–an argument upheld by Manu the lawgiver according to whom 'the householder who performs the ritual duties of his life-stage will eventually be united with Brahma.'[36]

* * *

Yasobanta Das occupies an important place among the *Pancha Sakha*, who responded to the social and psychological needs of the time while enunciating the *jnana-bhakti marga* for the 'attainment of the Divine' (I say 'attainment of the Divine' to mean the broad genre of mystic/spiritual experiences).[37] Yogendra Bipra, too, participates in this mission but as a representative vernacular poet–one who alters or revises received texts, refers to multiple well-known texts, reuses motifs and exploits them to create new meanings. He translates the grand narrative into an intimate narrative by making superhuman characters speak the idiom of village men and women. In so doing, he takes us to a world whose central images are very different from our own.

Notes

[1] One-stringed musical instrument similar to the ektara. The instrument is also called *lautumba* (*nautumba*, a caste-based variant), made as it is from a scraped gourd (*lau*)–the pot is made by scraping the kernel of the gourd. A string often made of horse hair is stretched over the pot and the neck of a split bamboo cane. Sometimes pumpkin or coconut shell is used for the pot. For the shape and size of the instrument used by the Nath yogis in Bengal, see A. C. Grierson, *The Song of Mánik Chandra. Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* Part I, No. 3, 1878, Plate XXIII. Other regional names of the instrument are *Gopiyantra* and *Yaktaro Gopichand.*

[2] Grierson 's *Mánik Chandra* was gathered from bardic performances. The text 'was copied out by an energetic *bábu* who had the greatest contempt for the dialect [Rangpuri] it illustrates. He showed his contempt by carefully *correcting* the text, wherever it differed much from his idea of the *sádhu bháshá'* (Grierson, *The Song of Manik Chandra* 66). Temple, like Grierson, talks of such people who helped him in the collection of folklore, and had an 'itch for improving the language of the bards' (*The Legends of Panjab*, Vol. I, p. xi in Naithani p. 4.) A second volume of *The Legends of Panjab* appeared in 1885 (*The Legends of the Panjab*. Vol. II. Bombay: Education Society's Press & London: Trübner & Co., 1885) , which is seven years after Grierson's publication. Such enterprises were seemingly part of a colonial mission to understand the colonized peoples. For an interesting account of the British folklorist's attitudes towards the bards, and his methods of collecting folklore, see Sadhana Naithani, "The Colonizer-Folklorist," *Journal of Folklore Research* 34.1 (1997): 1-14. Naithani says: 'Temple's "specific object" is the colonized subject, whose mind must be studied through folklore so that it can be ruled or controlled more effectively' (p. 6).

[3] See Kathryn Hansen, *Grounds for Play: The Nautanki Theatre of North India,* University of California Press, 1992. (Web. 12 Oct. 2013). Hansen (p. 65) records at least twenty-seven editions of *Gopichand Bharthari* published between 1866 and 1893 in the north Indian regions. The most popular edition seemed to be that written by Lakshman Singh. Little is known about him.

[4] I use the word 'accounts' the same way as A.K. Ramanujan uses 'tellings' in "Three Hundred Ramayanas: Five Examples and Three Thoughts on Translation." (See Vinay Dharwadker ed., *The Collected*

Essays of A. K. Ramanujan, New Delhi: OUP, 1999, 131-160). In the specific context of *Tika Gobindachandra*, I am forced to agree with Ramanujan's statement (p. 134) that one can never be sure of the existence of 'an invariant, an original or Ur-text' which makes the use of the word *version* gratuitous.

[5] See Ann Grodzins Gold, *A Carnival of Parting: The Tales of King Bharthari and King Gopichand as Sung and Told by Madhu Natisar Nath of Ghatiyali, Rajasthan.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992. (Web. 20 Oct. 2013).

[6] The truth about the life and writings of *Pancha Sakha* is currently a matter of debate. While some say that the so-called *Pancha Sakha* never existed, some others say that the *Pancha Sakha* did not live in any single period. Yet others believe that there were several poets bearing the name of the *Pancha Sakha* poets 'so the texts ascribed to each one of them could be doubtful' (see p. 63 in Debendra K. Dash and Dipti R. Pattanaik, "Translating Medieval Orissa," *Translation Today* 3.1/2 (2006): 20-81).

[7] Krushnacharan Sahoo ed., *Yasobanta Das O Gobindachandra*. Cuttack: Friends' Publishers, 1992. 81.

[8] See p. 275 in J. M. Mohanty, comp. *Odia Tattva (Santha) Sahitya*. Bhubaneswar: Vidya, 2010, 2nd ed. 275-346.

[9] Krushnacharan Sahoo (op. cit. p. 1) also makes note of a text titled "Gobindachandra" composed by Kalu as retrieved from Singhbhum. Singhbhum, which is now in Jharkhand, was once a part of Odisha's Gajapati kingdom. For versions of the legend of Gopichand in South Bihar, see Dirk H. A. Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput & Sepoy: The ethnohistory of the military labour market in Hindustan, 1450-1850,* Cambridge University Press, 1990. 77.

[10] Bansidhar Mohanty ed., *Konarka: Panchasakha Special.* Bhubaneswar: Odisha Sahitya Akademi, 1971. Rpt. 2004. 522.

[11] I have not found mention of such a name elsewhere. It is not known where this text exists.

[12] Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces (The Collected Works of Joseph Campbell)*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.

[13] The story of Gobindachandra also seems to have derived considerably from Buddhist lore. But there are a lot of broken links in the accounts to say anything with any degree of surety.

[14] Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, *Nath Siddhon ki Rachnayen* [Compositions of Nath Siddhas], New Delhi: Kitabghar Prakashan, 2011.

[15] The faintest details of a king called Gopichandra (Gobindachandra?) appear on page 13 of *Bulletin of Tibetology*, Vol. VI, No. 2, published in 1969 by Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Sikkim.

[16] Yasobanta's composition is composed of 2-lined rhyming stanzas and has 2090 lines in all. Each line of the stanza has 14 letters, a common form of metrical composition in Odia. Yogendra's *Tika* (Odia original) has 1662 lines written in *Bangalashree chhanda*– there are 20 letters in each line of the rhyming stanzas with a pause on the sixth, twelfth and final letters in each line. The first line of each stanza in *Tika*, however, shows a slight variation - there is no pause on the sixth letter.

[17] For a commentary on the commentarial genre, see p. 89 in V. B. Tharakeswar, "Translation Practices in Pre-Colonial India: Interrogating Stereotypes," *Translation Today* 3.1/2 (2006): 83-110. Tharakeswar sees the commentarial genre as a form of translation which has been excluded in scholarly research because of the general leaning towards 'shastric' literature but which could enlighten on how religious sects/sub-groups influence the production of such literature.

[18] Odisha once had a rich and vibrant tradition of *tika* writing. The earliest *tika*s were written on Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda* and date back to at least 14th century. The Odisha State Museum has preserved commentaries on *Gita Govinda* by at least eighteen different commentators, some of which are illustrated.

[19] See W. L. Smith, *Ramayana Traditions in Eastern India*, Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1995, 2nd rev. ed.

[20] K. C. Sahoo, *Odia Lekhaka Parichaya (1450-1850)*, Bhubaneswar: Orissa Sahitya Akademy.

[21] Douglas Kelly, "Translation Studii: Translation, Adaptation, and Allegory in Medieval French Literature," *Philological Quarterly* 57 (1978): 287-310. Also see in this regard, Jeanette Beer ed., *Medieval Translators and Their Craft*, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1989.

[22] Mircea Eliade, "Mythologies of Memory and Forgetting," *History of Religions* 2.2 (1963): 329-344.

23 Krushnacharan Sahoo (p. 29; see Notes 7) cites *Sudhakar Chandrika* (p. 240) in which the tune is called '*Jag Macchandar Gorakh Aaya*' [Awake Machhandar, here comes Gorakh].

24 Sahoo (op. cit. p. 28).

25 Discussions on the identity and whereabouts of *chaurashi siddhas* are yet to achieve closure. While Handa (85-91) discusses them as eighty-four siddhas living in the Himachal Pradesh area (see O. C. Handa, *Buddhist Art and Antiquities of Himachal Pradesh up to 8th century AD,* New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company, 1994), Pattanayak discusses them as eighty-five Siddhas who in order to escape persecution by the king in the then Odisha, went into hiding at a place called Chourashi (see Subhas Chandra Pattanayak, "Chourashi Siddhacharyas of Orissa: New Light on the Authors of Bauddha Gana O Doha." 9 Dec. 2002. Web. 23 Nov. 2013. <http://orissamatters.com/tag/chaurashi-siddha/>).

26 The Bhaumakaras ruled Odisha in the eighth and ninth centuries.

27 <http://www.thenon2.com/en/knowledge/mahasiddhas/10-mahasiddha-manibhadra-%E2%80%9Cshe-broken-pot%E2%80%9D%E2%80%9D-model-wife%E2%80%9D>

28 For the circumstances leading to Vitthalpant's excommunication, see Bonnie G. Smith ed. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Women in World History*. Vol. 4. p. 285. For the three women saints of the Varkari tradition, see Ruth Vanita. "Three Women Sants of Maharashtra." Manushi 50-51-52 (1989): 45-51. Web. Retrieved 2 Nov. 2014.

29 For an outline of the Nath tradition in Odisha, see pp. 55-60 in Prabhat Mukherjee, "Religious Condition of Orissa on the Eve of the Chaitanya Age," *The History of Medieval Vaishnavism in Orissa*, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1981, 49-60.

30 See *Bhavisya Purana* 3.4.14.40-43, cited on p. 30 in Wendy DonigerO'Flaherty "Asceticism and Sexuality in the Mythology of Siva. Part II." *History of Religions* 9.1 (1969): 1-41.

31 See p. 322 in Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty "Asceticism and Sexuality in the Mythology of Siva. Part I" *History of Religions* 8.4 (1969): 300-337.

32 O'Flaherty op. cit.

[33] O' Flaherty, II, p. 30. Shiva replies vehemently to Parvati's insistence on having a son:

I am not a householder, and I have no use for a son. The wicked gods presented me with a wife, but a wife is the most useless thing for a man who is without passion. Offspring are a noose and I will have none. Householders have need of a son and wealth; for them, a wife is necessary for the sake of a son, and sons are necessary to give the oblations to the ancestors. But I never die, and so I have no need for a son; when there is no disease, what use is medicine?

[34] Malik Muhammad Jaisi. *Padmavati*. Trans. A. G. Shirreff. Calcutta: The Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1944. Also see Alaol's *Padmavati* (17th century; Bengali translation).

[35] Giorgio Milanetti. "Two Wives for a Perfect Life: Nagmati and Padmavati in Jayasi's Padmavat as Symbols of the Integration of Bhoga and Yoga." *Journal of South Asian Women Studies* 5.2 (1999).

[36] See p. 638 in Richard Burghart. "Renunciation in the Religious Traditions of South Asia." *Man*, New Series, 18.4 (1983): 635-653.

[37] For a brilliant exegesis on the differences among the experiences of Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu and Christian mystics and how such experiences are contextually determined, see Steven T. Katz, "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism," in Steven T. Katz ed. *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, New York: OUP, 1978. 23-74.

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TIKA GOBINDACHANDRA

"Keep chanting the name of Rama, O King,
If you don't, O Moon of my Clan,
Yama, king of death, will put
A noose around your neck.

Yama, the Merciless, does not make out
Joy from sorrow;
He prefers fruits that are green
To those that are ripe,
Bringing all our woe.

Your sister will weep for six months;
Your sorrowing wives will forsake you;
Some will grieve for ten days, others for twelve,
But I, your mother, will mourn for you till I die.

Therefore, I beseech you, O Gobindachandra!
Start living as a yogi from tomorrow.
No death will frighten you, and I shall be happy
To see your face forever.

None of your wives can shield you from death,
Mere enchantresses as they are!
Today you die, and tomorrow you are forgotten.
In this transient world nothing lasts evermore.

They will dump your body at the cremation-ground,

And purify their courtyards with cow-dung water.
They will cry: Dead! Dead! shedding tears
For custom's sake. But none will follow you
To the land of Death.

Unescorted you have come,
Unattended you will leave.
Offering one lakh pure-bred cows to brahmins
Does not erase one's sins.
Remember, charity is the only virtue
That will save you from Death's agony."

This said, she ceased. And the son thus replied:
"O Mother! If this be your desire, why did you not
Ordain me an ascetic when I was a child?
Why now ask a king to quit his throne
And beg in the streets?
You cannot be my mother! But a devil,
An enemy, who cuts the roots of the creeper
While sprinkling water on it."

To whom the mother with wise words said:
"Enclose the pond of your life
With strong embankments
So that it ever remains full of water.
Letting the pond run dry will mean
Your days are over.
Water lies deep in the pond,
Fish live therein.
Water only can understand the grief of her child,

Her heart she pours out for him.
All can see the forest ablaze,
But none the heart of a mother
When it is up in flames."

Then the son asked,
" How to know a woman with no sons?"
To which the mother in answer thus returned:
" The water she bathes in is befouled;
The sun contracts infection from her mere look;
God leaves the temple as she enters,
Her very presence is ominous.
The soil she touches turns to desert;
The bough she sits on breaks;
Her offerings to ancestors are in vain;
The Earth trembles when she walks;
The tree that shelters her catches fire,
Its fruits wither.

Offering cart-loads of gold to brahmins
Cannot redeem such a sin as this,
But this can be done by
Giving food and clothes in charity.
Do not accuse me of having no son
Which is the greatest of all sins.

Your father had three hundred and ninety-six
Queens, all of whom had no sons,
But seven daughters each. Incensed,
The King built a hut
In the neem-grove in the jungle

And me there banished.
He never cared to know how I lived.

He sent me a seer of rice
And twenty cowries a day,
That rice I divided into four portions.
I offered one portion to Lord Shiva,
Another to brahmins and vaishnavas,
The third to gods and goddesses,
The rest I cooked for myself.

They gave me salt petre instead of salt;
Holes on the ground served as pots;
For fuel, they gave me twigs of eggplant;
For vegetables, Kalama spinach;
spine eel's head and stalks of eggplant for curry,
Horse urine in place of oil,
And wild peepal fruits for turmeric.

No ghee to do my hair;
No vermillion to adorn my forehead;
No bed but grass to sleep on,
No clothes but bark to wear.

When I could not bear it any more,
I called a messenger and told him,
' Proceed to my father as fast as you can.
Cover the distance of six months
In six days' span. Convey my reverence
To my father, King Lauchandra. Inform my brother
What the son-in-law has done. Tell my mother,

Mauna Dei, the daughter she married off at Banga Bazaar
Is now mucking out faeces of fifty two thousand
Fifty-three horses in the King's stable.'

Hearing from the messenger
The story of her ill-fated daughter
The mother broke down and let out a wail.
' God's wish must be fulfilled,' she said,
' Whatever Sasthi writes on one's forehead
Must happen, and can never be changed.
We, parents, only gave birth to you,
But your future lies in God's hands.'
To her, Lauchandra in consolatory words said,
'O Queen! Weep not. Our store-house
Is full of things of great value.
Go and find out something
That will remove our daughter's woe.'

At this Queen Maunabati rushed to the store,
And returned with a piece of gold of fifty thousand tolas.
To the messenger she commanded,
'Give it to my daughter who would be waiting
At the stable in the neem-jungle.'

The messenger left in haste, and the gold
He delivered to me. Seeing it, my joy
Knew no bounds. I thought, after long years,
My good days were coming back.

I sold the gold to a smith in Banga Bazaar
For one lakh thousand rupees.

I built a palace as big as your father's ,
Procured as many elephants, horses, cattle
And milch cows as your father had.
I hired the services of sentries and maids.
I armed the Lion Gates
With swords and guns, and posted sentries
To keep a watch. I kept a parrot and a mynah
As your father did, and taught them,
Among other things,
How to sing the name of Rama.

One morning when the king was cleaning his teeth
My mynah, from its golden cage, wailed,
' Help me, Your Majesty!
I am drifting on the waters of earthly life!'
Startled, the king ordered his men
To go to the jungle and find out
From where the voice sailed.

They combed every place, far and near
And came by my palace,
Of solid gold from whose pillars and pilasters
Gems and diamonds hung in clusters.
The voice of cuckoos
Emanated from the mango-groves
While parrots and mynahs sat on
The tamarind trees and talked.

Returning, they reported, 'Your Majesty!
Please go and see

How the queen you have banished
Has raised a palace in the jungle.'
Hearing this, the king wondered:
How could she, on her daily allowance,
Create such splendour ?
Hundreds of workers cleared the jungle path.
The king proceeded to the jungle,
Flanked by gunmen and cannoneers.

I was asleep at the time. In my dream
I saw the king arriving. Leaving the bed
I went to the Gates
With a pitcher filled with water
And found His Majesty standing there.
I washed his left foot, as humbly as I could.
I washed his right foot, and swallowed
The water used. I took him by hand,
And led the way to my bed.

Seated, he asked, 'Tell me,
Where did you get all the money from?
Certainly not from the meagre allowance I paid you.
You must have earned money by whoring.
If that be true, I shall not see your face any more.'

To this I answered, 'O King!
The wealth I got not by theft, nor whoring.
You can put me to any test you deem fit:
Have me drowned in water or make me touch a viper's teeth
Or let me walk on the edge of a sword

Or stand on the point of a needle
Or have a razor run round my throat.
In the name of Shiva I can swear.
I can even immerse myself in fire.'

'I will consign you to flames', he said.
He took me to the cremation-ground
Where the village ended.
There, with sandalwood and ghee
He built a pyre
And invited many to witness his queen's trial.

Clad in white
I stepped towards the burning pyre.
First I offered to my parents
Three handfuls of water,
Five handfuls to the village deity,
And seven to the sun.
Giving up the hope of life,
And chanting the name of Hari
I jumped into the roaring flames
And remained there for
Seven nights and seven days.

On the eighth morning your father arrived.
He called out, 'O Queen!
If sinless, present yourself
Or burn into ashes there if faithless.'

Hearing this, O my Son! I emerged from the fire

As bright and pristine as a champak flower.
Neither my hair nor my body
Had the flames touched.
I was feeling cooler
Than the water in the month of Magha.

From that day, O my Son!
I won the trust of your father.
My chastity he acknowledged
And me his chief queen declared.
With the intent to have a son
I left no stone unturned.
I observed all religious rites such as
Chaitra Tuesdays, Jagara and Panthei,
And went on a visit to Lord Jagannath.
For you, son! To Bhubaneswar I went.
I took a dip in Marichi pool and prayed to
Lord Lingaraj with all my heart.
Two hundred potfuls of water
I poured on His head,
Offered Him one lakh bel leaves
And two lakh Gayasa flowers.
I worshipped Parvati
With un-boiled rice and milk,
And Shiva with crores of champak flowers.
I lay prostrate before them,
And my prayer was answered.
Soon I conceived you.

Three months crawled by.
I kept count of the days.
In the fourth month, I could not stop myself
From yawning again and again.
In the fifth my tongue wagged for dainty dishes.
I felt very heavy and sluggish in the sixth.
The seventh I spent stretching out on the floor.
In the eighth I had to crawl.
At the end of nine months
I held a nine-day ritual.
What a terrible ordeal I had to pass!

After ten months and ten days of waiting
You were born.
At your birth, I fell into a swoon.
You were left to the care of the maids
Who cut the umbilical cord with a golden shell,
And raised a fire by burning sandalwood,
To keep you warm.

I observed Panchuati on the fifth day.
On the sixth I worshipped goddess Sasthi.
On day seven I left the labour room.
On the twelfth, I got all my clothes washed.

It was time to prepare your horoscope
And give you a name,
When the twenty-first day came.
A pundit and an astrologer were engaged,
Whose study revealed your allotted span

To be twenty-one years.
Hearing this, I fainted.
' Vain are my efforts, I am damned,' I said
While tears flowed from my eyes uninterrupted.

For two years and a half
I fed you with the milk from my breast;
At five I sent you to a chatasali;
I taught you state craft at the age of ten,
And crowned you king at fifteen.
As soon as you reached eighteen
I married you to princesses ninety-nine,
To the best of my choice. I made up my mind
To make you a yogi at twenty-one,
The year your death was predicted."

To her Gobindachandra in bold words said:
" Why did you not make me a yogi
When I was young and innocent?
Now I enjoy the monarchy
Of ninety-nine kingdoms,
Spread over eighty koshas in all directions.
If I leave, who will command my vast empire?
Should I be a yogi because I am scared?
An ascetic's life is ridden with afflictions,
Moving from place to place begging for alms.
Sun or rain he does not care.
Such hardship I cannot bear.
Better to die as king with sceptre in hand
Than to eat from the bowl of a gourd.

Should I quit everything
Because death is knocking at my door?"

" Do not call it a gourd, O my Son!"
Cautioned the mother, "It is Shiva's bowl;
Eating from it makes one immortal.
Take my advice, be a yogi from tomorrow."

Then the son thus said:
"With all the pomp and show
Of a royal wedding I married Rodama, Kodama,
Godama (whose younger sister came as dowry),
Hira, Lila, Jambabati,
Shashika, Kuntala, Marua, Malati,
Draupadi and many others. To abandon them
Is like persecuting them for no cause.
Had you sold me to a scavenger earlier
I would not now be driven into such despair."

The mother replied:
"The only escape from death
Is to do as I say.
Meditate on Krishna and be blessed
Or else rot forever in hell.
Do not mistake the pebbles for pearls,
You will be deceived.
Hari's name is Brahman. Chanting it
You can walk on water
Without wetting your feet."

To her the son sternly asked:
"What Brahmajnana are you talking about
While living in Banga Bazaar?
You could not even prevent Yama
From taking away my father."

To dispel her son's misgivings, she explained:
"I was meditating in river Jahnabi
When the news of your father's death came.
From there I went straight to Yamapura,
In wet clothes and water still dripping from my hair.
I pushed his brazen doors open with my left leg
And found Yama on the seat of judgement.
A roll of twenty-two maunds of cow-hide ropes
Hung from his shoulders. An unwieldy staff
Of iron, lay before him,
Another weighing eighty bisas on his shoulder.
He was asking Chitragupta to let him know
The deeds of the dead.
The virtuous he would convey to heaven.
The sinners to hell would be driven.

His audacity angered me.
Chanting Gorekh's name I slapped him
Across his face. 'What are you doing Mukuta?'
He said, 'Have I done any wrong?
It is for you I let your husband live
One hundred and sixty years.
Check the records yourself

And tell me if he deserved more.'

Taking the Book of Records from Yarna's hands
I riffled through the pages until I reached yours
And found your age to be twenty-one years.
That day I made up my mind
To make you a yogi so that death cannot bind.
Do not craze for land and wealth
Which your relatives will share out after your death.
But of your misfortune none will partake."

To whom the son regretfully thus answered:
"Then get me the things that a yogi requires:
A garland of Rudraksha, saffron clothes,
A cloth-bed, earrings and a deer-skin.
I would like to have them by tomorrow morning."

"But what is the use of all these things
When you have no guru to guide?"
The mother said, "Listen to me.
Hadipa, the scavenger,
Is the right man to be your teacher.
He can bring you salvation
And save you from Yama's anger."

The king, nonplused, stated thus :
"Why, then, he does scavenging
If he is so famous?
How can I serve a low-born such

This makes no sense to me."

To whom Mukuta thus replied:
" It is Brahma's curse that made him so.
In Satyayuga, he was a rishi's son
Who pleased Brahma by his devotion.
Brahma asked him to set himself on fire
To test if his devotions were pure.
'If you come out unhurt, I will give a boon.
If not, my curse will bring your doom.'

Hadipa went into fire, but as it touched
His navel, in pain he cried.
Enraged, Brahma pronounced a curse on him.
'You will take birth as a scavenger
And serve Gobindachandra at Banga Bazaar.'
'But how can I expiate my sins?' he asked.
Brahma answered:
' You do not have to do scavenging;
The betal will do everything.
By teaching the king the ways of Brahman
Your sins shall be redeemed and later on
You will attain siddhi, name and fame
And reach the heights that gods claim.'

As she finished, the king retired to his chamber,
Took his supper and fell into slumber.
Next morning he woke up early,
Putting on his wooden sandals proceeded slowly
To the baçkyard where he could keep a watch

On Hadipa's movements, he was interested much.

Crows started cawing, Hadipa came,
Followed by his son who was asking him
The name of the fruit in sight and was crying for it.
" It is coconut," the father replied,
"But how can we steal from the king's garden?
The guards will arrest us and to the king complain."
Unable to soothe his son
Who was crying still, he commanded
The tree to bend forward, which it did.
He plucked a fruit and gave it to his son
Who went away merrily. Then he asked it
To go back. Lo! The tree bent back on its own.
He turned to the spade and commanded:
"Clean the place quickly," which the spade obeyed.
The water pot sprinkled cowdung water
As soon as the spade stopped.
The broom swept away all the dirt
Before being asked.
In a moment the whole place was spick and span.
His duty finished, Hadipa returned home.

Awe-struck, the king went to his mother
And thus began: "O Mother!
I believe what you said.
I saw Hadipa and his son today.
The boy was crying for a coconut.
Hadipa called the tree, its help he sought.
In obedience the tree bent forward,

He plucked a fruit which to his son he delivered.
He ordered the tree to go back, which it did.
He, then, asked the spade, the broom and the basket
To work and they did all the cleaning themselves."

To whom the mother thus replied:
"Now you know Hadipa's yogic powers.
He must be your guru, the source of your deliverance.
Man is like wax, woman fire.
The nearer they are, the farther they are from God.
Even Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are no exceptions.
Overpowered by female charm
They were led to several births.

Human life passes as swiftly as wind and lightning.
It is only Hari's name that remains ever shining.
Look! How swiftly Gorekh descends from heaven,
Led by all his powers around him.
He who meditates on him receives
What he desires. Of all mantras
The name of Hari is the greatest.
Chanting it, one overcomes the fear of death.
If the human body be rain-water
Life, then, is a bubble
Or something much smaller.

You will besmear your body with holy ash;
Hold a trident and wear saffron clothes;
Carry a bowl made of a gourd,
And beg for alms from door to door.

Do not discriminate between
Those who give and those who do not.
Address all women as mothers
And all men as fathers.
Be compassionate, take the path of nonviolence

And to cattle and brahmins show respect.
Teach children not to resort
To violence and self-pride.
Detach yourself from things worldly.
Do not subject yourself to lust and anger.
Sleep less. To cross over the sea
Of Vishnu's maya that spreads everywhere,
Be a ripple, a wave.
Now let's go and meet your sacred teacher."

The sun had sunk.
Mother and son went to Hadipa's hut.
A basket of flowers, sandalwood paste
And camphor the king placed before him
And at his feet bowed. Embarrassed,
Hadipa held him in warm embrace and said,
"O King! It is a disgrace
For you to hold the feet of a low-born.
You a king and I a scavenger.
I live by the wage received from you.
I am cursed! No one likes my view.
O Mukuta! Have you lost your mind?
Why do you do all this, yourself being so wise?"

In mild words Mukuta thus implored:
"O Omniscient! Accept Gobinda as your disciple.
Teach him spiritual lessons and make him able
To overcome maya and be immortal."
To whom the wise sage thus answered:
"How do you sacrifice your only son
And your kingdom's future?
You are the eldest queen of King Ripuchandra.
How can you be so unmindful
Of your son and land?"

"It hardly matters," Mukuta replied,
"Enlighten him with the ways of Providence.
Let him on Hari concentrate. Let him
Achieve immortality through perseverance."

Turning to the king, the sacred seer advised:
" You must renounce all that you possess,
And bear hardship with steadfastness.
Your body is softer than butter.
I wonder if you will be able to suffer
The inhospitable environs
Of the cremation ground where to spend
A life without anyone around.
You are forbidden to eat indoors,
Use conveyance or drink water to quench your thirst.
You must learn how to circulate
The air you inhale through nine chakras
And release through the tenth.
Your nose and your navel should come closer

To each other, connected by the inhaled air.
By doing so, you can be immortal."

Standing at a distance with folded hands
Gobinda thus to his master replied:
"I take refuge at your feet divine.
I will meditate the way you ask me.
I renounce wealth, power and worldly joys.
I surrender myself to you, O Great Sage!"

Delighted, Hadipa administered
A mantra into his right ear.
Thus he ordained him an ascetic,
And showered on him all his blessings.
Gobinda, in response, washed his guru's feet.
That water he swallowed
And sprinkled over his body.
He, then, prostrated before his mother,
Asking her to go back and take over
The reigns of the kingdom.
Then he sat in deep meditation
Thinking on Hadipa, the venerable sage
And when he opened his eyes
He had a glance of Brahmajnana in the skies.

The estranged mother, in agony, began
To weep, "Why did I lead my son thus?
My only son now has become a yogi.
After holding him in me for ten months
I am now childless. My clan destroyed,

I have no one to save me now."

To her Hadipa in healing words thus answered:
" Go home and relax.
Do not regret what you have done.
You know it well.
Your tears cannot take him back."

To assuage her intense grief, the king consoled:
"Do not worry mother! Bless me,
So that I accomplish my mission
And come back to you in a short time."

Collecting herself, Ripuchandra's queen returned.
Gloomily she sat outside the village for a while,
Then the palace she entered.
Waiting anxiously for her mother in-law's return
And finding her returning all alone
Rodama burst into tears :
"Why did you seal the fate of ninety-nine girls?
Where is the Lord of my Life? O show him to me."
Saying so, she with other queens
And a bevy of handmaids,
Reached where the king had sheltered himself.
In sorrowful words Rodama thus complained:

"O Lord of my Life! We do not know what to do,
And how to live without you.
If you had decided to become a yogi earlier
Why did you marry, and a few days after

Leave ninety-nine queens to their fate?
O Lord of my Life! Who poisoned you thus?
By whose guile did you renounce the world,
Your vast empire and ninety-nine queens,
Elephants and steeds in thousands?
You have a palace girdled by the sea
And bedecked in diamonds where you appear
Adorning the royal seat on elephant back.
For what purpose do you give up the royal life?
What makes you go into exile?
Throw away the earrings and clothes.
I implore you to put on royal robes."

Face downcast, the king thus replied:
"O Queen! I renounce everything in a spiritual quest.
This world is illusion, I must break free.
I will conquer death, nothing can destroy me.
I go by my mother's words and Hadipa, the wisest
Will show me the path
Of salvation by making me sinless.
Forget me, O Queen! Have patience.
Think on Hari and serve my mother hence."

To him the queen thus implored:
"O King! Raise your face and look at us only once:
That will make us forget our sorrow.
We are sixteen, you are twenty years old:
What will happen to our youth, please consider."

The king to her firmly answered:
"I will not look at your face; it is my guru's order.
Who can alter the will of God?
Should you bow down to Cupid's arrows?
I will be a yogi, a wanderer with a gourd-bowl.
I will live on alms, meditate and purify my soul."

Hearing this, the queen was greatly shocked.
After a while to the king she thus spoke:
"Let it be. Have your meditation here in this hut,
Collect alms in a plate of gold,
Have many an attendant.
They will make the bed for you,
By sandalwood perfumed,
And bedecked with pearls and diamonds.
You need not go out for alms, we will fetch them.
Is not it true Trilochan, the yogi of yogis,
Has Parvati always by his side,
One of His eyes fixed on meditation,
The other on His wife?
O King! This you must consider.
O how cursed and unlucky we are!"

The king to the queens consoled thus:
"O Dames! This world is full of illusions.
It is neither desirable to build a hut
where to meditate,
Nor hiding from public view, eat in secret. "

Fraught with fury, Rodama now
Launched a tirade of abuse against the holy man:
"O you despicable hadi! You ignorant fool!
May lightning strike you, and to hell you go.
You duped our king by fraud and malice
To leave his kingdom and put out the light
Of our clan. You made us widows
While our husband is alive."

Saying so she collapsed
And fell over a rock. The maids nursed her
And brought her round.
The queens in chorus said, "O King!
What a misfortune to become widows under duress!
By taking poison we will kill ourselves."

"That is of no consequence to me,"
The king responded, "Whether you take poison
Or go to a hadi's bed.
We are not made for each other.
You may stay in the palace,
And enjoy all the wealth.
Do not create a scene, from here disperse."

Like the moon among the stars,
Gobinda was sitting encircled by the queens,
Who requested him another option to exercise:
"Stay with us for six months,
Then go wherever you like.

Will you prefer sleeping
In the dust to the royal bed?
Our chastity and fidelity are not respected.
Being such a wise man and of high status
Why do you, O King, disappoint us thus?
Allow us to accompany you;
We promise not to stand in your way.
Your company itself will wash our sins away."
But Gobinda warned them, "Do not do any thing
That will break my meditation
And convey me to hell.
Any disruption will lead my life astray."

All the queens tearfully expressed their grief:
"Who should we blame
When our mother-in-law has done this?
How could she not, being a woman herself,
Read other women's minds?
How could she ordain her only son,
The glory of her kingdom, an ascetic?
We are floating on the sea, ship-wrecked,
Who shall we ask for aid?
Both mother and son have stabbed in our neck.
They say something and do something else.
It is our bad luck, O King!
It is never your mistake."

Hearing this Gobinda answered to them thus:
"Until now you were my wives, now mothers."
Seeing no hope of the king's return

They left the place with a heavy heart.

Next came the subjects, sad and in tears,
Requesting the king to change his course.
But the king explained,
"It is what my fate directs me to do.
Kingship does not interest me,
Nor do the charms of my queens.
Go back and look after my mother, I advise."

They were asking,
"Who will now pay us our salary?"
The king called for the accountant
And asked his mother to open the royal treasury.
The arrears were calculated and payments made.
The subjects were awestruck, they had never thought
That the king would make their payments so fast.
"It is our bad luck," they sorrowfully said,
"No use staying here," so saying, they fled.

Meantime, Mukuta, with alms in a golden plate
Reached the king and asked him to take.
"I will take food only from gourd-bowl," he said,
"That, too, outside the house, under a tree,
As the guru commanded.
Flouting his words will land me in hell
I will have to live as worm for coming ages."

Moved into tears, the compassionate mother
Brought alms again and filled the bowl.
She drew herself aside lest he might shy.

Gobinda ate it gladly and sat on the platform nearby.
Then came the soldiers
Who tearfully beseeched the king:
"Our scriptures forbid one with no sons
To embrace asceticism.
Therefore first have a son, then be a yogi,
Leaving your son with your mother behind."
The king in bold words thus replied:
"I need no son, nor do I fear
The sin of not having one.
The root is more important than the branches,
I know. O my soldiers!
Take it easy and go back,
Serve at my mother's feet
And carry out her orders."

After the soldiers departed
Gobindachandra to his mother said:
"It is time to take leave of you.
Look after my queens.
Rule your kingdom well, do not despair
And do not deprive me of your blessings ever."

Seeing him off, Mukuta reached the queens
And administered a mantra into their ears
To remove their ignorance. Their earthly desires
Disappeared and they wished the king thus:

"May Chakadola pour His blessings on him.
May Baiswanara protect him from fire
And Baraha from water.

May Bamana lead his way.
May Padmanava guard him during sleep.
May Chakradhara come to his aid in times of war.
May Sridhara keep him in company of good friends.
May Rama take care of him in the mountains.
May all gods shower
Blessings on him on all occasions."

After all were gone, their attempts having failed,
Hadipa reached there,
And to the king he suggested:
" Let's go round the city to freshen our minds,
Take a dip in the river and wash away our sins.
Then only can we have spiritual discourses.
But not before you pay my fees
For having you ordained."

The king offered his kingdom,
But the guru declined.
"What will I do with your kingdom?" he said.
Puzzled, the king wanted to know his wish
To which Hadipa thus addressed:
"Since you are already initiated,
You must get to work from today.
Go through the city and collect alms.
Do not seek comforts, learn to endure pains.
Control your wrath and desire for sex.
Eat less and sleep less
Which is the secret of good health.
Focus your mind on the divine.
All adversities will change into things fine.

Rub your bowl a little everyday
Until it is rubbed out by and by.
Eat only as much food as it holds.
Stop eating salt, curry, sour things,
Spinach, meat and fish.
Take only rice and milk,
That will keep you healthy and youthful.
Stick to my instructions
Or else you will be in great trouble."

It was painful for the subjects
To see their king ending up a beggar.
They held the hadi as the main conspirator.
After collecting alms the king returned
And waited for his guru's command.
The guru to him thus instructed:
"Dig the earth and make a fire-place,
Light it, and place two pots of water on it.
Then add some rice to it unwashed."
That done, Hadipa said some mantra into his ears-
The mantra for automatic cooking-
And then recited, "Vishnu fetched water,
Brahma brought fire, now Rudrani will cook.
The sun god gave the bowl.
The one you have was brought
By Gorekh the Great."

Soon the cooking was done.
Digging a hole in the ground
They kept the pots of rice therein

And covered it with earth.
Putting a mark on the spot they left.

It was still night; the moon was in the west
When Hadipa and Gobinda, after their bath
Were smearing their bodies with the sacred ash.
Very soon the sound of conch and bells
Emanated from the nearby temples.
As soon as it reached Mukuta's ears
She got up and started for the village pond
To meet her son.
Startled, Gobinda lay at her feet, saying,
"What brings you here, O Mother?
Why visit someone already abandoned?"
She blessed her son, "May Vishnu protect you
On land and in water. May He give you
The strength to command the world."

Seeing her there, Hadipa thus began:
"Have you come here at this hour
To take your son back?
Such meetings may distract his attention
And disturb his meditation. Look, Mukuta!
Your guru is Gorekh, mine Kahnupa.
That way we belong to the same lineage
And are friends to each other.
I advise you not to be impatient, nor despair."

To whom Mukuta humbly replied:
"Do not be angry, O Venerable Seer!

I have borne him with the throes of a mother.
My only son I have abandoned.
Let me see him until my eyes are tired.
Without him my kingdom has lost its lusture
And my life is devoid of cheer."

Gobinda in mild words thus:
"For me you chose the path of knowledge.
For my success you handed me over to the sage.
Why are you filled with remorse, then?
Control your emotions, go back
And your kingdom reign."
It was the day of Dolapurnima on which
Hadipa and Gobinda left the city.
They travelled far to reach another country.
Gobinda collected alms from five houses
From which the guru took a half; the other half
He to Gobinda offered.
But having no salt and no curry
Gobinda threw it away secretly.
He then washed his guru's feet,
And lay wakeful all night.
Little before sunrise he went to bed.
But he could not sleep long
As the guru woke him up and took him
To the river for a dip. After bath they put on
Broad, smooth leaves round their loins.
Milk was their only food as the place, ravaged
By drought, had nothing except milk to offer.

Resuming their journey they passed
Kingdoms such as Amal and Kamal.
They travelled further and reached Sourastra,
A country rife with thieves and tigers.
Scared, they spent nights wakeful.
The guru wished to test his disciple:
Had he by now his desire for sex controlled?
Since he was young and accustomed
To share his royal bed with his wives,
Was he to Cupid's darts still vulnerable?
Thinking so, Hadipa took him
To a harlot at Kanchipura.

Rambha was her name, to her Hadipa said:
" My disciple is unwell after travelling long.
He will be with you till I return.
Take care of him as best as you can.
I will be away for four months on meditation.
Give him alms everyday and fulfil his desires."
So saying, the guru left for Kailash.

An apsara in her previous birth,
Rambha used to dance in Indra's court.
Once, while dancing, Indra found her unmindful.
He punished her for breaking the rule.
She was expelled from Heaven and sent to earth
To live as a prostitute and engage in sinful acts
"A sage will visit your place one day
With his disciple, king Gobinda by name.
He will leave him in your company.

Try to read his mind very carefully.
Thus your sins will be expiated
And you will regain your seat in Heaven," Indra said.

One day, reminded of Indra's words,
The harlot wished to know how pious
The king was. Richly gay in gems
And dressed wantonly,
She sat near him and cast her eyes
On him lasciviously.
She displayed her charms with conscious pride.
To force his attention and her wish to abide.
But the king was a great ascetic whom
Cupid's arrows dare not strike.
After a look at the harlot he cast his head down,
And remained unmoved.

To him in bland words she thus began:
"O Sage handsome! The fairest of all!
More elegant than Cupid!
I have given my heart to you since the day we met.
My wish is fulfilled, as if providence
Has brought both of us together.
Your guru has put you with me here,
Instructing you not to go anywhere.
Your body is too delicate to bear
The ravages of sun, rain and winter.

Sachi whose beauty heaven adores,
Parvati whose grace none can excel on earth,

And Kamakshi, Shiva's consort
Can never ever be my match.
Even Kamala who lives
With Vishnu in the underworld,
In my presence would look much paler.
Therefore, come and grace my bed.
See, how I have adorned it with sandalwood,
Camphor and flowers sweet-scented.
With many rare articles my house is stuffed,
Enough victuals that will your life-time last.
O Learned Sage! Discard the cloth-bed,
Throw away the gourd-bowl into water,
Change into silken robes

And smear sandalwood paste instead of ash.
Eat your food from a plate of gold.
I will not reveal it to your guru, I assure.
I have a secret chamber where none other than
The sun and the moon can enter.
Rise, O Sage! Give me your hand.
I will lead you to that dreamland."

She ended. The king to her thus replied:
"I am a low-born, touch me not.
I feed myself on alms.
I hold you as my mother,
So unholy words do not utter.
Keep your delicacies,
Wealth and luxury for yourself
Because to me, they are meaningless.
We, the yogis, live in the open.

In winter we raise a fire to keep us warm.
We eat whatever we get as alms.
We consider all women mothers.
Take me for your son and bless me
As a mother is wont to do."

To whom the harlot answered back:
"Listen, Darling!
Even great sages such as Janaka and Sanaka
Who lived only on air and water,
Their passion for women could not control.
Life is all about fun and making merry
Which you cannot have once you die.
Now, look at my face
And consider everything else useless."

To her Gobinda in careful words thus spoke:
" You are trying to lead me into temptations.
But my mind is steadfast.
At Banga, I have left behind ninety-nine queens
To fulfil my guru's and my mother's wish.
You are a harlot boasting of your beauty in vain.
I will not yield to your sinful ways, so refrain."

Her heart was filled with joy to hear those words,
Now convinced that her liberation was not distant.
Her sins atoned,
And soon to the heavens she would return.
She thanked God for being so kind to her.
His four-month long meditation past,
The guru came back to Rambha, the harlot.

Seeing the guru, Gobinda prostrated.
The harlot bowed to both. Hadipa asked her
All about his disciple. To which she replied,
"You have made him too cautious to be beguiled".
So saying, she threw off her mortal frame
And flew into the heaven
While both of them watched her agape.

Leaving Kanchipura they travelled further
And reached Kashi through North Koshal.
They visited the shrine of Lord Biswanath
And all the sacred sites there,
Taking bath in holy rivers each evening
To cleanse themselves of their sin.

From Kashi they went to Bhairabapur.
They sat under a tree, weary of their tour.
Durga was the only goddess worshipped there.
People ate flesh and gave the same to a beggar.
Hadipa, hungry, sent Gobinda to fetch some food.
He returned, disappointed,
Saying only meat was available.

"It matters little," the guru said.
Pointing to a sandalwood tree that stood nearby
He asked Gobinda to get some of its bark
Which served as their food that night.

Next morning they proceeded further
To reach Malab. There the guru called at
The house of a rich liquor-vendor.

"I need your help," to the vendor he said,
"To meet the expenses towards my travel
To the monastery. I pawn my disciple to you.
Assign him any work, he will do."

Taking some money from the vendor
Hadipa left the place leaving Gobinda there.
Gobinda would sell liquor day and night
With honesty and utmost sincerity
Which to the vendor was satisfactory.

The vendor's wife, a luscious lady of sixteen,
Greatly enamoured of his form masculine,
Clothed in raiments and bedecked in jewels,
Approached him one day, lust in her inflaming.
With folded hands and humble words
She begged him for love thus:
"Why leave the pleasures of the world aside
And live the wretched, ascetic life?
Come, let's love,
My heart leaps at your sight."

To whom Gobinda thus replied:
"I look upon you as my mother,
And your husband, who feeds me, as my father.
Considering that I pardon you
For what you said.
I do not like to pronounce any curse on you.
But in no circumstances
I can look at a woman's face;

It will belittle me in the eyes of others."

In fear of curse, she scuttled off.
Relieved, Gobinda directed his prayers to God:
"Glory to you, O Hari!
You have saved me from disgrace.
Pardon me if ever I am misled.
Give me the courage to reinvent my life.
May my mind remain steady at your feet.
May my wish to go to heaven be fruitful.

May I abide by my guru's words to the full.
I have withdrawn my mind from worldly affair.
O Merciful! Be my protector ever."

He, then, on his guru meditated
Who instantly appeared there.
Returning the money he had borrowed
From the vendor he told him,
"We are leaving you. Remain happy forever."
His wife came out, bowed to the guru and said,
"Thanks to your disciple, his parents and you.
He is immune to temptations;
Much I tried but failed.
He is as pure as god and for heaven made.
I have never seen a yogi to attain godhood
At so tender an age!"
To her Hadipa replied, "You are right!
His mother, a great yogini herself,

Has raised him to such a height."

Then they travelled on, at Gurjara arrived.
They stopped at a place
Where a fisherwoman lived.
At guru's call she came out and bowed.
With humble words she spoke out: "O Sage!
Who are you and where have you come from?
A victim of misfortune, I live here all alone.
You made my house sacred by coming here.
As long as you like, you may stay here.
I have no children to inherit my wealth.
The king will usurp it after my death.
God, the Almighty, is my only saviour.
For me, service to holy men is service to God."

"We know all about you," Hadipa interrupted.
To whom the woman begged,
"Bring any number of yogis I do not mind
I will be glad to serve them and feed."
To her with kind words Hadipa thus replied:
"We thank you for being so kind to us.
But I have only this disciple whom I trust.
He will be here,
Give him five handfuls of alms a day.
Since I do not take any food, I will not stay.
Let him be here until I return.
Assign him any work, it will be done."

Instructing Gobinda to obey his new mistress
And wait for his return from visiting the Poles

The guru left the place.
Gobinda would rub the bowl everyday
And eat as much as it contained.

Every night she used to fry the paddy grains.
Gobinda would remove the chaff
And the parched rice thus obtained,
He would sell at her shop as she directed.
One day to Gobinda she said,
"O Sage! You can see for yourself.
My sheds are full of milch cows.
My barn has a stock of maunds of corn.
I also lend paddy to others and get
One and a half times of it in return.
These things keep me busy round the year.
You gave me relief and made my work easier.
Let me tell you how to sell: Two measures
Of parched rice for one measure of paddy grain."

She found Gobinda at fault one day while
Giving more quantity of parched rice
For much less paddy. Him she warned,
It might incur a great loss to her.
To which Gobinda with wise words thus answered:

" Look, Mother!
What will you do with all your wealth
Which the king will grab after your death?
Having so much already, do you need more?
Many out of the surfeit of pleasure

Have turned into ascetics.
May I adduce the example
Of Gobinda, the king of Banga
Who quit his throne for a life spiritual.
What he did not have: a vast kingdom,
Ninety-nine queens of beauty matchless,
Thousands of horses, elephants and attendants.
All this he cared not, for his only aim
Was to become a yogi and achieve wisdom."

He ended. And the old woman thus stated:
"Can Gobinda, a wandering ascetic,
Be more righteous than I am?
What justice did he do to his kingdom,
Family and throne by abandoning them?
The anguish of his deceived wives
Will send him to Hell. Look at me!
I help the needy with food and clothes
From the money I earn by labouring much.
Who, then, is superior: Gobinda or me?

The essence of religion in self-sacrifice lies
Which one can perform at home.
It is never wise to give up everything
And beg from door to door.
See, I am thirteen hundred eighty years old.
But for the noble works I do
I am young and agile as ever."

Having said, she ceased.

Her arguments Gobinda silently listened.
From that day he gave up eating by day;
He ate only once at night.

The young yogi's manners filled her with curiosity
Till the day she discovered
The marks of lotus feet
Below his ears. "He must be a great man,
A king or the like," thought she.
Therefore, she spared him of his duties.

"Perhaps she has recognised me," he thought.
Since that day he preferred to remain outdoors.
He sat outside her house day and night
For four years until the guru arrived.

Hadipa returned after his visit to the Poles.
Gobinda lay at his feet who blessed him thus:
"May you live in heaven forever." He asked
The old woman about his disciple's manners.
She prostrated and with folded hands,
In humble words thus replied:
"O Sage! Never has he done any mistake
That is worthy of mention.
He speaks not unless spoken to.
He never goes out, pays no attention to others,
His mind steadfast, he did nothing obnoxious."

Bidding her farewell
Hadipa and Gobinda went on their travel.

"Let's visit your kingdom first," Hadipa said,
"You will see your mother and know for yourself
How things are there." "I am not interested,"
The king replied. But the guru insisted,
"You should see your mother and return soon
Before anyone comes to know of it."

It was night when they reached the palace.
The guru, stopping at the Lion Gates,
"You may go now" to Gobinda he commanded,
"And meet your mother, now that all have gone to bed.
Come back before anyone comes to know of it."
"The doors are locked from within," the king said.
The guru, then, pressed the door with his hands.
Lo! The doors opened wide for the king to pass.

Entering his mother's chamber,
He called aloud, "Wake up, mother!"
She got up from bed, the king touched her feet.
"O my son has come!" She exclaimed in ecastacy.
Then she asked about his guru and went inside.
She brought him some food, but was surprised
When he asked for salt.
"You have been with the guru for twelve years.
He taught you nothing as it appears.
You have to give up salt and rice, both
And live on air and travel across the earth."

They, then, met Hadipa at the Lion Gates.
Mukuta lay at his feet in respect.
To him she said, "O Great Sage!

What have you been teaching him all these years?
I am sorry to see he still takes salt
Which eats away human flesh,
As said by scriptures.
The sense of taste he must give up
In order to be immortal.
Now, take him back.
Let him live on air to attain siddhi
And be blessed, forever live."

Hadipa, the Wise, thus answered:
"O Mukuta! Dismiss your fears.
He will learn things step by step.
He came here only to see your face.
Do not worry, you will find him all perfect
When we meet you next."

So saying they left her. Soon it became morning.
Kodama to Rodama told about her dream,
How she saw the king coming the night before
And leaving the palace after meeting his mother.
She woke up, and not finding him, bitterly cried.
To her Rodama, thus replied:
"I, too, saw him in my dream, lying on my bed,
Telling me many jokes, advice added"
Soon the palace was filled
With the wailing of the queens,
Each giving her own story of the king's visit.
Hearing the noise, the subjects gathered there.
Finding the situation grave Mukuta had to interfere.
With words of consolation she advised them,

To wait for four months for the king to return.
"Twelve years have passed,
We have not seen his face,"
The queens murmured. Mukuta assured
That her son must return and his kingdom restored.
Satiated, they retired to their chambers.
No more crying and filled with hopes.

On the way Hadipa to the king said:
"Did not you hear what your mother said?
She blamed me for not doing enough
And to have wasted those twelve years.
You can accomplish your task by giving up food.
Live on air only to attain godhood."
He showed him a root and said,
" By eating this siddhamula you will not die."
He gave him a mantra
To make his practices easier
And the breath moving upwards he must control.

Gobinda replied: "By rubbing constant
My gourd-bowl has turned to a crescent.
Allow me to consign it into water
And let me live on air hereafter."
The guru consented. Into water the bowl was thrown.

Then they travelled day and night
Through hills and jungles in great delight.
A herd of cattle they came across.
They drank some milk there after days of fast.
Then they walked on until they came near the sea

Where they stayed for a few days
Living on fruits, roots and soft leaves.

Casting his eyes on the sacred sire
Gobinda to him implored:
"O Master! While at Banga, I used to hear
From a brahmin, a frequent visitor,
The story of seven seas and seven islands
Which I long to see."

To which the guru consented:
"I will show you the seven seas:
Of wine, milk, curd, salt, ghee,
molasses and the one transparent.
I am reading out some mantras
For you to memorise. Chanting them,
Wonderful results you will receive.
Paduka mantra will enable you
To walk as far as you wish.
Using Anjan mantra
You can see things up to a hundred miles.
By Sannyas mantra you can travel
Through heaven, earth and hell.
With the help of Annapurna mantra
You get a potful of boiled rice,
By cooking just a grain; the pot
Remains as full, even after feeding many.
Kuhuka mantra will make you invisible
While Akata mantra will save you
From the fear of lightning and sword.
Now you have become immune to death.

For all your devotion
May God pay you the just reward."

Thus Hadipa read out the mantras
One after the other which Gobinda
Memorised with avidity and pleasure.
The guru conjured two carpets of grass
On which they sat and sailed across.
The wind astern was blowing,
Pushing them forward with the celerity of lightning.

They stopped in Singhala,
An island of five thousand koshas,
A sweet region, crowded with temples and gods.
Next they flew to Kusha island,
Four koshas spread,
Rich with gems, diamonds and pearls,
Where they stayed for a day.

Then, chanting Paduka mantra
They reached an island called Ramyak.
Thus they visited the seven seas
And the seven islands
And all the holy places in a span so short.

Filled with pleasure, Gobinda thanked the sire
For his divine guidance and his mother
For her unfailing support throughout the days.
Fixing his eyes on the guru, he said,
"Can the throne and the sceptre
Be more valuable than a yogi's power?

All allurements of the world,
I understand, are mere vanity.
None could ever save me from death,
Neither Rodama and Kodama nor my subjects.
I will turn the impossible into possibility
By controlling breath to the best of my ability."

Satiated, the guru thus replied :
"Now that you have accomplished your mission,
Let's go and visit some more places."
They covered many places of pilgrimage: Ganduki,
Gomati, Kedar, Gautam, Chitrotpala,
Baitarani, Ganga, Ayodhya, Mathura,
Brindaban, Kashi and Kapila.
This way they visited
Many places for twelve years without rest.

"Let's now visit your kingdom,"
Said the sacred sire,
"Where you will have
The pleasure of meeting your mother."
Gobinda seemed not interested, but he consented
To accompany his guru wherever he led.
From the outside of the city they viewed
All dwellings to dust razed.
The place looked as desolate as a burial ground,
With deer, tigers and rhinos around.
All the wells and ponds had run dry.
Seeing all this the guru to Gobinda said,
"Where did all the subjects disappear?
Go now, travel the city and meet your mother.

Enquire from her about your queens."
At the guru's command he flew into the skies.
He saw the entire city had crumbled to dust.

From the Lion Gates
He viewed the fisherwoman's hut.
"Wake up, mother!" He called at her door.
Hearing him, she came out and said,
"O Sage! Why do you call me at night ?
Not for alms I know, then tell me straight
What brings you here at night so late?"

Gobinda to her replied:
"Here was a king, Gobinda by name,
Who as a yogi went away.
It has been twenty-four years since he left
Quitting his throne, royal power and wealth.
His mother and ninety-nine queens must be here.
Their whereabouts I am eager to hear."

To which the old woman thus answered:
"You are that king you just mentioned."
Embarrassed, Gobinda hurried away
And entered the palace without delay.
"Wake up, O mother!" he called aloud.
The queen, from the ivory bed, suddenly rose.
"O my Gobinda has come!" the mother spoke,
"How pleased I am to see you after twelve years!"
Holding back her tears she enquired of his master,
Then brought him food and milk to devour.
Gobinda accepted it not, saying he took no food.

The mother was pleased to hear it
And blessed her son
To have her wish fulfilled.

Then both of them went out to meet Hadipa
Who was found resting in a dilapidated temple.
The sage held them in warm embrace.
To the queen he said,
"You must be happy for your son's success.
He has attained siddhi. Now take my advice.
Both of you rule your kingdom
In peace and prosperity."

Turning to her son Mukuta thus stated:
"O Gobinda! Let me see what magical arts
The sacred sire to you has taught.
Now, ask this coconut tree to give a fruit.
Whether it obeys you or not,
Let me find out."
Gobinda called the tree, it bent forward
To reach his hands
And then bent back at his command.
"Can you change this stone to gold?" She asked.
The stone became a piece of gem as he touched.
Then he picked some earth
And changed it into holy ash by magical powers.
Highly delighted, the mother at her son's success,
Greeted him with a many hugs and kisses.

Then Hadipa to Gobinda said:
"Get me the rice preserved under the earth.

It must have been well cooked in these years."
Gobinda, with a crowbar, dug the earth.
And brought out two pots. He opened
The cover and found them ridden with worms.
"O Sage! It smells stale!" he complained.
But the guru to his disciple thus stated:
"O King! Those who eat salt and curry
Are short-lived. Siddhi comes only to those
Eating milk and rice.
Now let the three of us take this food
Of immortality, which, having been
Under the ground so long
Must be as hot as fire."

They ate the food with pleasure immense.
Before leaving,
The guru wished the king all the best
And said, "Rule your kingdom well,
I leave for Kailash.
You may see me any time
When your heart desires."
So saying he disappeared.

Queen Mukuta with mild words to her son advised:
"Dear son! Remain in this temple for a year.
You can move about using your magical power."
To whom Gobinda thus replied:
"My presence here will not remain a secret.
All will recognise me and throng this place.

I will fall into the mire of maya again.

Better here you peacefully reign.
Allow me to spend my life as a wanderer,
Visiting holy places in the seven islands yonder.
I will travel across the earth and heaven
And meditate hard to see hell with eyes open.
I will sail over the seven seas
And visit the Poles' domain.
I assure, I will come to see you very often."

The mother bade him a happy goodbye.
Chanting Paduka mantra, Gobinda flew away.
He travelled far and wide in all directions,
Revisiting the seven seas and the seven islands.
After long travel, at Singhala he stopped,
Where golden ramparts the skies propped,
Where all houses of gold embossed
With coral beams enchased in diamonds and gold.
He beheld people chanting Rama's name there.
Then he left the island for Ratnabarapura.

At the entrance Baruna recognised him.
The god of seas said, "Welcome, O Banga's king!
By your unflinching devotion
To your guru and god
You could come here in body and soul.
Your yogic powers raised you to the position of god.
Stay here for four months and enjoy all."
Gobinda promised him to come another day
And spend a few days there.

Saying so, he went away.

Reciting a mantra, he flew into the air
And reached Alakapuri, of diamonds and gold.
There he stayed for a year invisible to others,
Then to Kuberapura he set his course.
Kubera, God of wealth told him: "O King!
You have conquered the cycle of life and death.
Stay here for some days and be my guest.
I will give you whatever is the best."
Assuring him to come later
The king went back to Barunapura
Where he spent two months
Before leaving for Swargapura.

Seeing him, Indra, the king of gods, thus greeted:
" Hail Gobindachandra, the king of Banga!
Let me know what brings you here."
" On a goodwill visit" was the answer.
" You are immortal by Hadipa's grace," he said.
The king for seven nights there stayed.

Next he visited Brahmapura
Where Brahma is the only ruler.
From there he went to Yama's abode,
Yoshobantapura called, where he was welcomed
By Yama who got up from his throne
And said, "You have won death by your devotion."
Saying so, he offered him a seat.
Gobinda stayed there for a while

And then proceeded to Mrutyupura
Where the dead lived.

In the space, he saw Tantipa displaying his pranks,
Feigning weaving a piece of cloth
From a loom that did not exist.
He was in the west, Gorekh came from the east.
Soon a quarrel ensued.
Gorekh, furious, was scolding Tantipa
With harsh words thus:
" Do you think yourself greater than I am ?
How shameless you are! Boastfully pretending
To weave cloth from nothing?"
" So what?" Tantipa boldly replied,
" Can you stop me from doing that?" In a rage,
Gorekh asked the loom to stop, which it did,
But at Tantipa's command it started again.
Not once or twice, it
Went on several times until Tantipa
Gave in. He then said, "Gorekh!
Now I will change my form.
I challenge you to catch me if you can."
Gorekh warned him, "Remove your loom from here
And allow me to pass over."

To this Tantipa defiantly replied:
"It is your bad luck that we have met.
I will teach a lesson you will never forget.
I have mastered all sixty-four yogic practices.
I can take any form from human to insects.

Let me have a test of your prowess,
If you can recognise me ever."
To which Gorekh consented.

Both ready, the game started.
Down Tantipa swiftly descended.
He became a bull, Gorekh took him by the hump,
And when his neck he twisted, he ran away.
He, then, changed into a coconut.
When Gorekh was about to pluck it, it vanished.
Next he flew into the sky in form of a bird.
Gorekh, Matsyendranath's disciple, beat him hard.
Tantipa soon turned into a linga and hid himself
In one of the many Shiva temples.
Gorekh knew in which temple his opponent was
And when he pulled it down,
Tantipa disappeared.
He, then, as a fish disguised,
Hid himself inside water.
Gorekh spread a net to catch him there.
Tantipa quickly turned to a crab.
Gorekh pulled him from the burrow
And his legs broke.
Then he became a cloud floating in the sky.
Gorekh, as wind, drove him away.
Tantipa now turned to thick mist.
Gorekh dispelled it by becoming shafts of light.
Finally, Tantipa took the form of a snail.
When Gorekh began smashing it, he cried,
" I surrender, O Great Sage!

Show me your wonders".
Gorekh smiled and said,
" None can recognise my forms."
" O Master!" Tantipa begged, "At least for once
Change your form, let me see your powers."

On his request, Gorekh turned to water
And mingled with water too.
Tantipa's attempts to find him fell through.
Desperate, he called him loudly to appear.
Gorekh, smilingly, soon appeared there.
He advised Tantipa to work harder
To achieve the greatest siddhi and be immortal.

Meantime Gobindachandra there alighted
And lay at the feet of Gorekh
Who was happy to see him.
To Gobinda the sage thus addressed:
" You are my grandson
As your mother is my pupil.
Whatever wisdom she received, in you she instilled.
She delivered you to Hadipa
Who made your siddhi easier.

I give you a boon.
You can take any form you wish
And not get recognised. Take this holy ash;
It will not let your body
Be damaged by water or earth.
You will live for eternity

Without pleasure and pain.

The Deluge you can escape
Chanting Vishnu's name.
He has no form, no beginning nor end.
But He assumes the form His devotees intend.
He is Brahma, the creator,
Vishnu, the preserver and Shiva, the destroyer —
All three rolled into one.
He resides in every soul; none can see Him.
He has no eyes, yet all-seeing.
No ears, but He hears everything.

Moved by the words of the sacred seer
Gobinda asked him his doubt to clear:
"God has no shape, you say.
Then how could He in every soul stay?"
To which the sagacious guru thus replied:

"Listen, Gobinda! He manifests Himself
Everywhere and in everything.
No words, nor reason can describe Him,
He contains all the world in His strides.
Even Vyasa, Sukadev and Angira,
The great sages do not know His identity;
They only feel His presence by meditating.
He has no form, as I said earlier.
He is the Holy Spirit present in every being.
There He is, there He is not.
He never shares the actions

Which shape human fate.
Men, led by illusion,
Act against Heaven's will
And bring ruin upon themselves
And make themselves short-lived.
Their actions determine their future birth:
Whether to reassume human form
Or take the form of worms.
Even in an insect His spirit lives
Which merges with the void after it dies."

Enlightened, Gobinda spoke to him thus :
"I have heard of God's incarnations.
I wish to know what they are and why does God
Have to come to earth as a mortal."

To whom Gorekh lovingly answered:
"Glory to you, O King! You have asked
Such a question to which, the greatest sages
Of the world have no answer.
Let me pass on to you
What I have heard from my master.

In Satyayuga, there was a demon, Sankhasura
Who stole the Vedas by his demoniac power.
In a cave in the ocean he kept it hidden.
Brahma, worried, prayed to Vishnu to intervene.
Vishnu turned into a large fish, killed the demon
And retrieved the Vedas from the ocean.

Instructed by Vishnu,

Brahma created the fourteen worlds.
Still unhappy, He expressed his agony thus:
'I created the worlds at your command.
With Gods, demons and men I filled the land.
I wish Indra to remain in charge of the Heaven,
But our coffers are empty
And his kingship is in vain.'
To which Vishnu replied, 'O Brahma!
All our wealth has been washed away
Into the main by the Deluge.
We must churn the sea, get back
The wealth, and use it freely.'
Then gods and demons together
Pulled out the Pole with which to churn.
For it to remain steady
Vishnu changed Himself into a tortoise
Which served as the pivot, and on which
The Pole rested with firmness and poise.

Sage Kashyap had two sons:
Hiranya and Hiranakshya,
Both haughty and imperious.
Vishnu killed Hiranakshya taking the form of a boar.
Hiranya filled Heaven
And Earth with terror of war.
On Brahma's request,
One of His devotees did Vishnu send
To be born as Hiranya's son, Prahlad by name.
Prahlad's devotion to Vishnu
Provoked the ire of Hiranya who poisoned him

And got him wounded by a tusker,
Had him thrown into the sea that enraged the god
Who, in form of Nrusingha, suddenly appeared
From a pillar and tore Hiranya apart.
There was a demon king called Bali,
An epitome of piety and generosity.
His virtues scared Indra,
Who feared Bali might replace him.
To eliminate him Brahma's help he sought.
Both of them went to the Milky sea
And met Vishnu there.They invoked Him
to check Bali's progress further.
Vishnu took birth as Kashyap's son.
Bamana was his name as he was short in form.
As a young brahmin, he went to Bali's place,
Sang from Sam Veda, standing at the Lion Gates.
Pleased, Bali welcomed him and promised
To offer whatever he wished.
Bamana wanted him to swear
In the name of God, taking water
In a conch as the customs command.
To which Sukracharya, his minister
Objected, asking the king not to swear.
Heedless to his words,
Bali advanced to take the vow,
A conch in hand, filled with
Some sesame seeds and water.
He raised the conch to pour water down,
But no water trickled,
As Sukracharya had lodged himself within,

Preventing water to pass.
Bamana pushed a blade of grass
Into the mouth of the conch
That pricked the eye of the minister.
The obstacle gone, the vow was taken.
Bamana prayed for a small piece of land
Equal to thrice the size of his foot.
He covered the sky with one foot,
With the other the earth.
The third foot he produced from his navel,
Planted it on Bali's head
And pressed him to the bottom of hell.

Parsuram, the saint, was his next incarnation
Who, by his might, the world won.
In Tretaya Vishnu took four forms:
Rama, Lakshman, Bharata and Satrughna.
To honour his father's promise,
Rama went into exile
With Sita and Lakshman, to the forest,
Where by guile Ravana abducted Sita
And confined her to the Ashoka forest.
Rama made friends with Sugriba,
Killed his brother Bali and built an embankment
From the main land to Lanka.
He killed Ravana, rescued Sita
And became the king of Ayodhya.

In Dwapara, He appeared as Krishna
Who lived in Gopa and enticed Gopis.
He killed Kansa and his henchmen eight,

Kept the Pandavas secure, destroyed Kuru dynasty
And His own. He taught Uddhab the law of God
Before He left the world.

In Kali, He incarnated as Bouddha, worshipped
As Jagannath and Balabhadra at Nilagiri.
Kalki will be His next incarnation
Who will destroy the sinners
And protect the devotees of god
From the oppressors.

I have summed up for you the ten incarnations.
Now take this holy ash; it will save you
From death and destruction."
Tantipa took it from him and smeared it on
Gobinda's forehead.
After which Gorekh departed.

Gobinda went back and sat in deep meditation
On the banks of Ganduki River
For seven-year-span.
Then he met his mother,
Told her what Gorekh had said,
Then left for Kailash where Hadipa resided.
He narrated his experiences before the revered sage
Who enquired about his mother. To which he said,
"She is fine in the company of my queens,
Ruling the kingdom with great efficiency."
" Now tell me," the guru asked,
" Where would you like to stay?"
" I have no other wish," Gobinda replied,

" But to serve at your lotus feet."
Pleased, the Wise Hadipa, granted his wish.
Gobinda spent his days meditating on God
And lived happily ever after.

* * *

Thus Lord Shiva to Parvati related
The story of Gobindachandra who defied
Death by his unflinching devotion to god.
An extraordinary feat for a man of Kaliyuga!

O Noble Ones! Keeping Gobinda's story in mind,
Think on Hari to escape the well of worldly life.
In this Kaliyuga, people perform sinful acts.
They meddle in envy, greed and lust.
There are many who live in self-pride obdurate,
Having nothing of their own, covet others' wealth.
O the Wellwisher of the impoverished !
Keep me away from such evils.
May my mind remain steadfast at your lotus feet.
When the time for my death will come
Yama's attendants will place a noose on me
And to Hell will I be thrown.
Be pleased to bless me, O Chakradhara!
So that I go on chanting your name forever.
May I concentrate my mind on the feet
Of Hadipa, Gorekh and Tantipa
And may I utter the name of Hari
While I breathe my last.

O Noble Ones! Forgive my mistakes
If there are any.
Ignorant as I am, lacking in ability,
I could not have completed
Gobinda's story without God's help.
He will redeem the sins
Of His slave with kindness.
May I dedicate myself
To the service of Shiva and Parvati.
Thus speaks Yogendra Daibajna Bipra 1730
Praying for Their mercy.

GLOSSARY

Akata	the impenetrable
Angira	a sage born from Brahma's mind; father of Jupiter; author of many slokas of Rig Veda
Anjan	collyrium
Annapuma	oddess Lakshmi
Apsara	a celestial damsel
Baiswanara	the god of fire
Baraha	boar; the second incarnation of Vishnu
Barunapura	the abode of Baruna, the king of waters
Bel	a sacred Indian tree; its leaves are used in the worship of Shiva
Betal	a supernatural being who does errands for man
Bisa	a unit of weight used in old times
Biswanath	Lord Shiva
Brahmajnana	the knowledge of Brahman
Brahman	the ultimate reality underlying all phenomena
Chakadola	Lord Jagannath
Chakra	Each of the six esoteric circles imagined to be inside the human body. In Tantra Yoga, there are ten such circles.
Chakradhara	Lord Krishna
Chaitra Tuesdays	Tuesdays in the month of Chaitra, the twelfth month in Odia calendar , on which goddess Mangala is worshipped.
Chatasali	A village school run by abadhans (teachers) in pre-modern Odisha
Chitragupta	The record-keeper in Yama's Court

Dolapurnima	The full moon day in the month of Phaguna, the eleventh month of Odia calendar, on which swing festival is held in honour of Krishna and Radha
Dwapara	One of the four Ages in Hindu mythology
Gayasa	A wild Indian plant; the flowers of which are used in the worship of Shiva
Ghee	clarified butter
Gorekh	Gorakhnath, a Nath yogi and a powerful exponent of Yoga Marga
Hadi	a member of the lower caste; a scavenger
Hadipa	one of the four Nath gurus who belonged to the lower caste
Indra	the god of thunder
Jagara	a festival falling on the fourth new moon day of the month of Magha, the tenth month of Odia calendar, on which lamps are offered to Lord Shiva
Janaka	a rishi and king of Mithila, father to Sita, the wife of Rama of Ayodhya
Kahnupa	one of the Nath yogis
Kailash	Mount Kailash, the abode of Lord Shiva
Kalama	an edible water-plant
Kaliyuga	one of the four Ages in Hindu mythology
Kamala	Lakshmi
Kansa	king of Mathura, killed by Krishna
Kashyap	a great sage, father of Sun
Kosha	a unit of length used in old times
Kubera	the custodian and god of wealth
Kuberapura	the abode of Kubera
Kuhuka	magic
Linga	(Hinduism) a symbol of divine generative energy, especially a phallus and phallic object as symbol of Shiva
Matsyendranath	(Macchendranath, Minapa) originator of Nath saiva lineages; adi-guru of the Nath cult

Marichi pool	a small pool at Kedaragouri, Bhubaneswar, Odisha where issueless women bathe on a particular day wishing to have a son
Mrutyupura	the land of the dead
Nilagiri	the original abode of Lord Jagannath
Nrusingha	the fourth incarnation of Vishnu, having the body of a man and the head of a lion
Padmanava	Vishnu
Paduka	foot-wear
Panchuati	a ceremony held on the fifth day of a child's birth
Panthei	goddess Mangala
Parvati	a benevolent goddess, consort of Shiva, mother of Ganesh and Skanda, often identified in her malevolent aspect with Durga and Kali
Ratnabarapura	the sea
Rudraksha	a sacred tree, the seeds of which are held most sacred by Hindus
Rudrani	consort of Rudra, another name for Shiva, associated with storm
Sachi	consort of Indra
Sama veda	One of the four Vedas
Sanaka	a sage; a progenitor of mankind
Sannyas	asceticism
Sasthi	a goddess who is the protector of a child
Satyayuga	one of the four Ages of Hindu mythology
Siddhi	(Hinduism) enlightenment; attainment of divine power
Sridhara	Vishnu
Sukadev	a sage; the son of Vyasa, who narrated the Bhagavata to the dying king, Parikshita
Sukracharya	the son of sage Bhrigu and the guru of the demons
Swargapura	heaven

Tantipa	a weaver who was initiated into sadhana by guru Jalandhara of the Nath sect and became known as guru Tantipa
Tretaya	one of the four Ages of Hindu mythology
Trilochan	one with three eyes; Lord Shiva
Vyasa	the great sage who authored the Mahabharata, Bhagavata etc.
Yama	(Hinduism) the guardian, judge and ruler of the dead, and is represented as carrying a noose and riding a buffalo
Yamapura	the abode of Yama
Yogi	a person proficient in yoga.



Basant Kumar Tripathy, formerly Reader in English, is an academician, poet and translator. He is a co-translator of Phakirmohan's *Atmacharita* and *Lachhama* and is the recipient of an award on translation by Phakirmohan Sahitya Parisad in 2013. He is the author of two anthologies of Odia poems : *Lal Ghodar Laskar* and *Mu Kebe Nathili Ki Nahin*.

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